



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

A Monthly Journal of the
Ramakrishna Order
Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

Editorial Office
P.O. Mayavati, Via : Lohaghat
Dt. Pithoragarh 262 524, U.P.

Publication Office
5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700 014

Phone (91)(33)244 0898
(91)(33)245 2383
Fax (91)(33)245 0050



Rates of Subscription (inclusive of postage)

	Annual	Life (20 Years)
India	Rs. 45	Rs. 500
Sri Lanka & Bangladesh	Rs. 120	Rs. 2000
U.S.A. & Canada		
Air Mail	\$ 20	\$ 300
Other Countries		
Air Mail	£ 15	£ 225

Cover: Rameswaram Temple
Inset : Indira Gandhi Road Bridge
(Pamban)

APRIL 1997

CONTENTS

Divine Wisdom	...	...	329
The Priority Editorial	...	...	330
Mundaka Upaniṣad Swami Sridharananda	...	...	336
On the Wrong Scent, Ho! K.S. Rangappa	...	...	339
Vivekananda's Miltonic Poem: 'Angel's Unawares' Prof. B.N. Sikdar	...	...	341
Facets of Ego Swami Nityasthananda	...	...	348
Adventures of a Layman in the Realm of Vedanta Tapobroto Bharadwaj	...	...	353
Letters to the Editor	...	...	366
Teachers' Forum: Synopsis of Question-Answer Session Swami Nikhileswarananda	...	...	370

(Continued on next page)

News and Reports	...	...	...	373	Report on Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's Return	...376A
------------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	--	---------

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 102

APRIL 1997

No. 4

Divine Wisdom

DETAILS OF THE PATH OF DEVOTION

(Sage Kapila to his mother Devahūti)

Sage Kapila in reply to his mother Devahūti's question regarding the details of the path of devotion says as follows:

भक्तियोगो बहुविधो मार्गैर्भामिनि भाव्यते।
स्वभावगुणमार्गेण पुंसां भावो विभिद्यते॥

The practice of Bhakti takes many forms according to differences of traditions. This is necessitated by the fact that people's attitudes and tendencies differ according to the dominance of particular Gunas of Nature in them.

अभिसन्धाय यो हिंसां दम्भं मात्सर्यमेव वा।
संरम्भी भिन्नदृग्भाव मयि कुर्यात्स तामसः॥

The man dominated by Tamas imagines Me, at the bidding of his cruel nature, as a being entirely in separation (as a tribal deity, a polytheistic god) to be propitiated from motives of vengeance, ostentation,

jealousy and other low propensities.

विषयानभिसन्धाय यश ऐश्वर्यमेव वा।
अर्चादावर्चयेद्यो मां पृथग्भावः स राजसः॥

The man of Rajasic nature worships Me as an extraneous being in images and the like for worldly enjoyments, wealth and fame.

कर्मनिर्हारमुद्दिश्य परस्मिन् वा तदर्पणम्।
यजेद्यष्टव्यमिति वा पृथग्भावः स सात्त्विकः॥

The man of Sattivka nature, while still maintaining the attitude of separateness from Me, performs worship for liberation from the bondage of Karma (i.e. for Moksha), or as an offering to God, or as a scriptural injunction to be obeyed.

Srīmad-Bhāgavatam, 3.29.7-10

The Priority

Sri Ramakrishna. The name signifies many things to many people. In the Preface to the first edition of the *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* published by the Advaita Ashrama, the publisher observes, '...it is a noteworthy fact that no man has been the subject of so many conflicting estimates as the Prophet of Dakshineswar.' While some looked upon him as a *sadhaka* of an extraordinary type, to some he was just an illiterate temple priest. Some there were, extraordinarily well-versed in the scriptures, who were prepared to demonstrate in a gathering of learned pundits that Sri Ramakrishna was an incarnation of Chaitanya, one in whom the nineteen *bhavas* or the devotional moods were manifest even as they were in Radha and Sri Chaitanya. For many of the signs seen in Sri Ramakrishna, persons of authority found scriptural parallels. To some he is the Incarnation of Age, one born to fulfil a mission—that of redeeming humanity from sufferings. He himself said to Narendranath, that he who was born as Sri Rama, he who was born as Sri Krishna, had now taken the form of Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Vivekananda himself looked upon Sri Ramakrishna as 'the reformed and remodelled manifestation of all the past great epoch-makers in religion'.¹ And one who reads his life is bound to discover that he has come face to face with a person who knew well the priorities in the lives of all human beings.

Remarkable about him is the fact that, even as a mere boy, he chose not to go in for

that education which aims at 'bundling rice and plantain', an expression that means 'earning a livelihood'. The *Mundaka Upanishad* talks about two types of knowledge: the lower knowledge (*aparā vidyā*) and the higher knowledge (*parā vidyā*). The *aparā vidyā* includes the study of *Rg-Veda*, *Yajur-Veda*, *Sāma-Veda*, *Atharva-Veda*, the science of pronunciation, the code of rituals, grammar, etymology, metre, and astrology. All this constitutes the lower knowledge. As compared with this, there is a higher knowledge, says the same Upanishad, by which is realized the Immutable.

In India, students go to schools, colleges and universities to *gather facts* by selecting a discipline for study. All of this falls under 'lower' knowledge. By this process it is perhaps possible to earn a living. And that is what motivates students in general to select a course of study. In general, it is neither their aptitude nor their ability that they consider vital for selecting the course of study pursuing which they will be able to extend the horizon of knowledge and thereby benefit humanity. What is important to notice in today's education is that the motivation comes from the pursuit of money. This attitude has become a virus and has infected both the students and the teachers in a large way.

The situation in other countries may be better or, perhaps, none too different. With all the aptitude tests and intelligence tests it is possible that the stream of study for a student is properly chosen. Yet even then it is usually seen that the final motive is not a purely academic pursuit. Economic considerations often enter into the picture when

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 6, pp. 185-6. [Hereafter CW]

the question of survival looms large.

It is sad however that neither in the East nor in the West the same question is ever raised: What next? What is the desired end of all education? If education ends in accumulation of wealth and, in due course, of procuring every conceivable form of enjoyment, is it not very demeaning? What is the purpose of life? Is it merely to grow, receive education, seek employment, be a parent of a couple of children, and die? Shall human life repeat this monotonous and ever-becoming but never-attaining story for eternity? Can there not be any meaningful goal to attain? Is study of external nature and manipulation of its forces for the material benefit of mankind sufficient? Is there no way or need to solve the psychological problems faced by man? Why do people put an end to their own precious lives just because they could not achieve a few evanescent things of the world? Can they not try for something higher and nobler than mere biological existence? Can they not strive to accumulate treasures 'in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal'?²

In the *Kāṭha Upaniṣad*, we come across that young boy Nachiketa who goes to Yama, the King of Death, and asks as the third among his three boons to know the ultimate Truth. Yama begins to test him by urging him to ask for any other boon on the ground that it was doubtful whether even the gods had knowledge of that ultimate Truth—a knowledge too lofty for a young lad to comprehend. To a persistent Nachiketa, Yama offers the following suggestion:

[Perhaps you are too young to know what you should ask for.] Ask for sons and grandsons that will be centenarians.

Ask for many animals, elephants and gold, and horses, and a vast expanse of the earth. And you yourself live for as many years as you like [so that you may enjoy these pleasures]. If you think some other boon to be equal to this, ask for that. Ask for wealth and long life. You become a ruler over a vast region. I make you fit for the enjoyment of all delectable things.... Pray for all those cherishable things according to your choice. Here are these women with chariots and musical instruments such are not surely to be had by mortals. [In short, ask for 'lust and lucre'.]

This is what we aspire to get in return for all our studies! But the reply which Nachiketa gives to Yama shows his great insight. Says he:

O Yama, ephemeral are these, and they waste away the vigour of all the senses that a man has. [The capacity to enjoy will diminish but not the urge to run after pleasures!] All life, without exception, is short indeed. [Even the longest span of life you may offer is finite.] Let the vehicles be yours alone; let the dances and songs be yours. Man is not to be satisfied with wealth.

Today, students need that insight. We should not make the pursuit of ephemeral joys the *goal* of human life. Basic comforts may be acceptable though. And in this relaxation of the ideal of total renunciation we are guided by that large heart of Swamiji which argued, 'Why should millions suffer that a few may reach the ultimate goal of human life?'

However, it must be borne in mind that the way to blessedness does not lie in the pursuit of academic knowledge merely which is but the *periphery* of real education. The end of all *academic* knowledge is vividly

2. St. Matthew, 6:19.

portrayed by the frank utterance of Narada in the seventh chapter of the *Chāndogya Upanisad*:

I have studied, most revered Sir, the *Rg-Veda*, the *Yajur-Veda*, the *Sāma Veda*, the *Atharva-Veda* as fourth, the epic and mythological poems as the fifth Veda, grammar, necrology, arithmetic, divination, chronology, dialectics, politics, theology, the doctrine of prayer, necromancy, the art of war, astronomy, snake-charming, and the fine arts—these things, most revered Sir, have I studied; therefore am I, most revered Sir learned indeed in the scripture (*mantravit*), but not learned in Atman (*Ātmavit*); yet I have heard from such as are like you that he who knows the Atman vanquishes sorrow. *I am in sorrow. Lead me then over, I pray, to the farther shore that lies beyond sorrow.*

All secular knowledge will never be able to take man beyond sorrow. It may give comforts that tickle the senses. And today man has found out that he is, even in the midst of all luxuries, suffering from a vacuum in the heart. There is emptiness. True joy is still a far cry.

The concept of education in India is: 'education is that which liberates'. Whatever constitutes obstruction to our expression of our real nature is to be removed. To those of limited vision, the removal of economic constraints, of health deficiency, or of social inhibitions is considered sufficient. So they seek to fulfil these short-range goals. The *Gītā* talks of *yoga* and *kṣema*, procuring things which we need but do not have, as well protecting such things as are already procured. To achieve this end a large number come to education. That may be necessary but not sufficient. In mathematics one comes across the expression 'necessary and sufficient condition'. 'Necessary' is not enough;

it should be 'sufficient' too. We must not fail to note that on acquiring true education we are freed from ignorance. Sri Ramakrishna's stand is: to know many is ignorance and to know the One is knowledge. All our meddling with the objects and forces of nature are all in the realm of ignorance or relative knowledge. Real knowledge is that which removes our ignorance of our real nature. Acquisition of every type of relative knowledge still leaves us ignorant in that vital respect and so it is *not* sufficient. When real knowledge dawns, then one gets a different world-view in which multiplicity does not exist and one realizes that there remains nothing else to be known or obtained. And so real knowledge gives us the realization that nothing else exists of which one should be afraid. Nothing else exists which can affect us in any way. It gives us strength and courage. But that strength comes only through the pursuit of higher knowledge and having our inner vision opened.

This is what is characteristically Upanishad-like in Sri Ramakrishna: He does not want to have that education by which one can make a living. His passionate appeal to the Divine Mother was: 'You revealed yourself to Kamalakanta, to Ramprasad. Why do you not reveal yourself to me?' His illustrious disciple Swami Vivekananda hence defines education as the manifestation of perfection already in man with spirituality—defined by him as the manifestation of the divinity already in man—as the inner core of all education.

The joy of sense pleasures has dimmed the intellect of man. He sees before him his forefathers of a few generations and is blindly imitating their ways. He does not see before him the example of the ancient *ṛṣis* whose descendent he is. He is unable to see that the goal of human life is god-realization. The advent of Sri Ramakrishna was therefore the need of this age. His life clearly

demonstrates to erring man how he can correct his course in life. Both the East and the West are in need of this experience. Pursuit of sense pleasures cannot be the goal of human life. Love of God should make one take the plunge and devote oneself to alleviating the sufferings of others on all planes: physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual. The goal is therefore, '*Ātmano mokṣārtam jagaddhitāya ca*, one's own liberation and the good of the world'.

About the spiritual practices of Sri Ramakrishna, we find a beautiful introduction in the authorization:³

...a new chapter in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, the beauty, grandeur, loftiness, and pathos of which will fascinate the readers as they follow step by step the progress of this eager aspirant from the early outpourings of his heart in devotion at the feet of the Divine Mother, through the period of his unquenchable thirst to see Her, on to the consummation of his Sadhana in the realization of God, and the establishment—or rather rediscovery—of his relation to him—a subtle achievement equalled only by that of other Great Ones of the world. We wish we might be able to express an infinitesimal part of his throbbing renunciation, tremendous sincerity, and passionate search for God. So great was his yearning for God that twelve strenuous years passed in a state of divine intoxication, during half of which period he did not close his eyes in sleep. Unconscious of hunger, thirst, or any of the cravings of the body, or of the things happening around him, Sri Ramakrishna, during that period of Sadhana, was almost like a madman. Day after day, month after month, year after year, he was immersed

in the depths of that intense spiritual fervour.

This is quite unimaginable to our ordinary minds, yet it is true. As a fruit of that one-pointed yearning for realizing God, he became the guide for every earnest spiritual aspirant who came to him in later years. Both in India and abroad eager spiritual aspirants, even today, find support in his Name, image, and message. Sri Ramakrishna told about himself, 'Verily I tell you, I know nothing but God.' He knew nothing, his Divine Mother knew everything. The child of the Mother depended on the Mother for everything. This message is so potent that it stimulates humankind even today and it prompts one look to God *alone* for support and guidance, without depending on other human beings and worldly objects.

Sri Ramakrishna, himself god-intoxicated, never failed to point out that the goal of human life is God-realization. Sambhu Mallick once talked to Sri Ramakrishna about establishing hospitals, dispensaries, and schools, making roads, digging public reservoirs, and so forth. Such charitable works are considered meritorious and prescribed in the scriptures as *pūrtam*. The results of such meritorious actions are a life in heaven which many aspire to, failing to see that the fruits of such actions are exhausted on their enjoyment in heaven. Without going into this scriptural stand, Sri Ramakrishna said,

Don't go out of your way to look for such works. Undertake only those works that present themselves to you and are of pressing necessity—and those also in a spirit of detachment. It is not good to become involved in many activities. That makes one forget God. Coming to the Kālighāt temple some, perhaps, spend their whole time in giving alms to the poor. They have no time to see the

3. Life of Sri Ramakrishna (Calcutta, Advaita Ashrama, 1977), p. 47.

Mother in the inner shrine! First of all manage somehow to see the image of the Divine Mother, even by pushing through the crowd. Then you may or may not give alms, as you wish.⁴

Those who are averse to the performance of work either out of laziness or out of aversion to facing the many hurdles that come with the performance of work interpret this in a fashion that suits them. They prefer to meditate on God to realize him, as if that is an easy thing for all. Such people also fail to notice that there were many instances in Sri Ramakrishna's own life when he had himself performed pious acts. Let us consider a few of such acts performed by Sri Ramakrishna.

One such instance relates to his visit to Deoghar when becoming filled with compassion on seeing the miserable plight of men and women of a poor village, he requested Mathur Babu to feed them one day and to give to each a piece of cloth and sufficient oil to cool their heads. Sri Ramakrishna pointed out to Mathur Babu that he was but a manager of the Mother's estate. No amount of pleading by Mathur, who pointed out that the pilgrimage would require much money, was of any avail. Sri Ramakrishna only became all the more obstinate and sat amongst the poor people. A similar incident occurred at a place called Kalaighat near Ranaghat.⁵ But even these examples are looked upon by those who are averse to works as acts performed by Sri Ramakrishna only *after* the culmination of spiritual practices!

How to break the lethargy? How to make man look beyond the Vedantic stand that there is no trace of action in Brahman quoting which man many times chooses the path of inaction even without having attained the knowledge of Brahman? Is it only for the purification of the mind that one is called upon to do unselfish action? Can not work be transformed into a sadhana? For man who spends only a small part of his life in sadhana, and the major part in doing all other types of works, a philosophical stand is necessary while he is engaged in action. What is needed is the spirit to convert all works into acts of worship so that a few hours of work will give the joy of that many hours of meditation. Not merely that, it gives continuity to meditation. There is no ideational change between the meditative state and the active mood. Such action will also be unselfish, being performed to please God. What is the universe in the ultimate analysis if it is shorn of name and form? If we can not pierce through the mask of name and form can we not put another mask, the mask of the divine, over the world as it appears? In the words of Swami Vivekananda,

'everywhere his hands, everywhere his feet, everywhere his ears, he covers everything.' All other gods are sleeping. What vain gods shall we go after and yet cannot worship the god that we see all round us, the Virat?⁶

...may I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.⁷

Shelve your intricate philosophical

4. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1994), pp. 142-3. [Hereafter *Gospel*].

5. *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1970), pp. 270, 462, 280, 562-3.

6. CW, vol. 3, pp. 299-300.

7. CW, vol. 5, pp. 136-7.

speculations for the present. In our country we at present need manhood and kindness. 'स ईशः अनिर्वचनीयप्रेमस्वरूपः।—The Lord is the Essence of unutterable love.' But instead of saying 'प्रकाश्यते क्वापि पात्रे।—He is manifest in special objects', we should say, 'स प्रत्यक्ष एव सर्वेषां प्रेमरूपः। He is ever manifest as Love in all beings.' What other God—the creation of your mind—are you then going to worship! Let the Vedas, the Koran, the Puranas, and all scriptural lumber rest now for some time—let there be worship of the visible God of Love and Compassion in the country. All idea of separation is bondage, that of non-differentiation is Mukti. Let not the words of people dead-drunk with worldliness terrify you.⁸

The basis for this stand of Swamiji is to be found in the words of Sri Ramakrishna:

There was a time when I too would meditate on God with my eyes closed. Then I said to myself: 'Does God exist only when I think of Him with my eyes closed? Doesn't He exist when I look around with my eyes open?' Now, when I look around with my eyes open, I see that God dwells in all beings. He is the Indwelling Spirit of all...⁹

One can meditate even with eyes open. One can meditate even while talking. Take the case of a man with tooth-ache.... Yes, even when his teeth ache he does all his duties, but his mind is on the pain. Likewise one can meditate with eyes open and while talking to others as well.¹⁰

As to how to live in the world *and* strive for god-realization *without* shirking duties

on the one hand and being caught up, on the other hand, in the snare of many duties which make one forget God, Sri Ramakrishna says,

Live in the world but, in order to realize God, hold fast to His Lotus Feet with one hand and with the other do your duties. When you get a respite from your duties, cling to God's Lotus Feet with both hands—live in solitude and meditate on Him and serve Him ceaselessly.¹¹

However, this is difficult to practise if while performing our works we are not also passionately attached to God. That constant bent of mind to see the divine Spirit in the poor, the ignorant, the illiterate, the down-trodden should be there so that in the words of Swamiji, we come to such a state,

...that even in the vilest of human beings we could see the Real Self within, and instead of condemning them, say, 'Rise thou effulgent one, rise thou who art always pure, rise thou birthless and deathless, rise almighty, and manifest thy true nature. These little manifestations do not befit thee.' This is the highest prayer that the Advaita teaches.¹² □

11. *Gospel*, p. 627.

12. *CW*, vol. 2, p. 357.

8. *CW*, vol. 6, pp. 410–11.

9. *Gospel*, p. 561.

10. *Gospel*, p. 605.

You have, of course, your worldly duties and responsibilities. As long as this creation lasts, duties and responsibilities will exist. But in the midst of all these you will have to make a little time to call upon the Lord in seclusion; otherwise you will come to grief.

—*For Seekers of God*, p. 102

Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

परीक्ष्य लोकान् कर्मचितान् ब्राह्मणो
निर्वेदमायात्रास्त्यक्तः कृतेन।
तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत्
समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम्॥
*Parīkṣya lokān karmacitān brāhmaṇo
nirvedam-āyān-nāsty-akṛtaḥ kṛtena;
Tad-vijñānārtham sa gurum-evābhigacchet
samit-pāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham.*
(I.ii.12.)

A Brāhmaṇa, after scrutinizing the worlds that are gained through learning should become dispassionate, seeing that the Uncreated (Brahman) cannot be attained through karma. For knowing that (Uncreated Reality), let him go with sacrificial faggots in hand to a spiritual teacher who is versed in the Vedas and established in (the knowledge of) Brahman.

This *mantra* gives the answer to our question at the end of the last verse. A Brāhmaṇa is one who is desirous of knowing Brahman. An introspective person examining the *karma-kāṇḍa* comes to the conclusion that finite work will give finite results. Thinking further and examining the life of the *vānaprasthīs* and *sannyāsis*, he finds that what they attain after their death is not the permanent Reality. So he is eager to find out if there is any method of freeing oneself totally from bondages for all times and become merged with the eternal Reality. He loses all interest in *karma* and becomes imbued with the spirit of renunciation.

The impact of dispassion is such that, however tempting a worldly object may be, we feel that it is not for our ultimate good. Though pleasures of life are available to us,

we do not want them. Rejection of temptations is *vairāgya* or *nirveda*. So, based on the insight that through works one cannot reach the *akṛta*, the uncreated, Brahman, a person rejects *karma* and becomes a Brāhmaṇa, a seeker of Brahman. He understands that, though *karma* does give strength of character, will-power, purification of one's motives, etc., still it does not bring realization of the Infinite. Thus, one becomes a Brāhmaṇa after subjecting the ideals of *karma-kāṇḍa*, *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa* to a very critical review to find out their merits and demerits.

Karma-kāṇḍa is in the realm of *aparā-vidyā*, but so is *vānaprastha*, where one has to perform certain minimum duties of that life, and the meditation (*upāsana*) and prayer (*prārthanā*) to the supreme Being are dualistic. Even the third stage of *sannyāsa* (or *yati*) is not synonymous with the *sannyāsa* as enunciated by Shankaracharya, but only signifies one who strives for mastery over himself through full control of his senses, and worships Hiraṇyagarbha, the First Person in the process of creation. This is the highest attainment possible for the followers of *aparā-vidyā*, in which *jīvātmā*, individual selfhood, is not totally transcended.

Now the teacher says that a Brāhmaṇa is one who desires the *parā-vidyā*, by which the *akṣara*, the Immutable, Atman or Brahman, is attained. He knows that this *vastu* (Substance) cannot be generated by any activity. It is *akṛta*, a non-product. Otherwise, It would degenerate and disintegrate. Being absolutely convinced of this, he has no attachment to anything of the world—he becomes a *vairāgī* (renouncer). Knowing that

the *lokas*, worlds or levels of consciousness, created by *karma* are *anitya* (transient and finite), he is not interested in attaining the worlds; he has seen enough of it, and is no more going to be drawn into its snare.

Is there then nothing in the world by which one can attain the Eternal? There must be something, because the Upaniṣads would not have held up an impossible goal through such utterances as, '*Aham brahmāsmi*, I am Brahman', '*Sarvaṁ khalu idaṁ brahma*, All this is indeed Brahman.' Now, nothing in the world can be learnt without being taught. So how can *Brahma-jñāna* be learnt without being taught? It is an inflated ego which thinks it can guide its own destiny, though it does not even know itself clearly. Therefore one has to approach a guru who is qualified to teach *parā-vidyā*. One should go to a guru as a seeker, suitably prepared. The *Brāhmaṇa* already possesses the basic disciplines of spiritual life he has cultivated so far, and he now goes with a humble, modest and receptive attitude to a guru. He does not go with the wealth he may have, but with sacrificial faggots in his hand, with which the sacrificial fire of *yajña* is lighted—the fire to which the knowledge of Brahman is often compared.

The guru must be one who is unselfish (*akāmahataḥ*), who has mastered the subject of *parā-vidyā*, a *śrotriya* (learned in the scriptures) and a *brahmaniṣṭha*, a *brahmavittamaḥ* (knower of Brahman). He is one who has achieved what the Śruti, the Vedas, has taught. The essence of the Vedic teachings has been assimilated into his personality. But the Śrutis contain both *parā* and the *aparā-vidyās*. So, being a *śrotriya* is not enough. The teacher's special description is that he is a *brahmaniṣṭha*: absolutely firm in his knowledge of Brahman as his own Self, and able to see all things as the manifestation of Brahman. Everywhere it is suggested that spiritual life is primarily a process of being and becoming, the evolution of a *jīva* into Divinity. And *niṣṭā* means total dedication

to the extent of losing one's limited identity to find his greater identity in Brahman. Only such a person, having the capacity to mould a seeker of Brahman, is qualified to be a guru.

The student comes to such a teacher and offers the sacrificial fuel, symbolically requesting the guru to light the fire of knowledge in him. This knowledge is not purchasable but can be cultivated. *Vijñānārtham* means with a view to realizing, and can be best understood through Sri Ramakrishna's example of first hearing about milk, then seeing, touching and smelling it, and finally getting its true and complete knowledge by drinking it, assimilating it, and becoming strong. *Jñāna* is intellectual knowledge, but *vijñāna* is that knowledge which has become one with the whole being, thinking, and behaviour of the student. The Upaniṣad suggests that it is not intellectual understanding of Brahman or *parā-vidyā* which is sought, but the end result is total transformation of one's whole being by realizing Brahman.

There appears to be a contradiction here. On the one hand, the seeker is convinced that the Infinite cannot be obtained by finite means and, on the other, he wants to attain the Infinite by his own efforts following the guru's instructions. Is this not a wrong stand? No, there is really nothing wrong about it. The main theme is that we are in essence Brahman and so is the cosmos. So, what the student is aiming at is that he will follow certain methods as enjoined by the guru. By these finite efforts he will remove the obstructions to Knowledge in the form of his desires and become aware of Truth. Thus, he is not *creating* the final result, but merely removing the veil of ignorance (*ajñāna*) which is preventing him from knowing his own original nature. The idea is that the *jīva* is Brahman, but is not aware of this because of *ajñāna*. The *tapasyā*, austerities, taught by the teacher will dispel that ignorance, revealing the Eternal in Its own

glory. If one holds a card before one's eyes, then one does not see the sun. The sun is there and the eyes also are there, but he still does not see the sun. The card between him and the sun prevents him from seeing it. The finite effort of *tapasyā* is like removing the card, which does not *create* the already existing sun, but merely destroys the barrier. This idea is the ground-work for the closing *mantra* of this *Muṇḍaka*.

तस्मै स विद्वानुपसन्नाय सम्यक्
प्रसान्तचित्ताय शमान्विताय।
येनाक्षरं पुरुष वेद सत्यं
प्रोवाच तां तत्त्वतो ब्रह्मविद्याम्॥
Tasmai sa vidvān upasannāya samyak
praśānta-cittāya śamānvitāya;
Yenākṣaram puruṣam veda satyam
provāca tām tattvato brahma-vidyām.
(I.ii.13.)

Unto one who has approached duly, whose heart is calm and who has reached peace, such an enlightened teacher should clearly impart, exactly as it is, the knowledge of Brahman, whereby one realizes the true and imperishable Puruṣa, the supreme Being.

The first two lines of this *mantra* give the qualities of the student, and the last two lines are injunctions to the guru. Thus the qualifications of the *śiṣya*, disciple, and the guru are specified in the above two *śloka*s.

The guru was identified in the previous *mantra*. Now the *śiṣya*'s qualities are mentioned as *praśānta-citta* and *śamānvita*: that is, he has totally controlled his inner organ (mind) and the outer sense organs. He can now channelize all his energies in one direction as he wants, and has the power to penetrate the veil of ignorance. Such a student approaches the teacher in the best possible manner, having perfectly practised *sama*, *dama*, *uparati*, *titikṣā*, etc.¹ with no disturbing desire lingering in him.

His mind is tranquil because the *sad-*

ripu (six enemies, passion, anger, etc.) have been conquered. He has not even a trace of restlessness, and so is fit to concentrate on what is going to be taught. His spirit of inquiry arises from a sense of his own inadequacy and incompleteness. Now he has realized that the world cannot give the peace of mind which comes from knowledge of the Atman, and his whole being is ready to receive that knowledge. As Buddha said, one must charge like a rhinoceros, unstoppably, with all energy to penetrate the veil of ignorance and to know one's true nature.

The guru only ascertains or evaluates whether the disciple has the above qualities. It is enjoined upon him to teach such a fit disciple the secret of Brahman. If the student is deserving, the teacher must impart to him the secrets he has been treasuring in his own life. The seeker must be taught *tattvataḥ*, without ambiguity or hesitation, clearly, that Knowledge, *yena*, by means of which, *akṣaram*, the Imperishable, the Immutable, the eternally true *Puruṣa*, is known.

The next chapter (*Muṇḍaka*) teaches the methods that are available for us to reach the goal.

(to be continued)

1. *Viveka* (discrimination), *vairāgya* (renunciation), *śama* (restraining of mental propensities), *dama* (restraining of external sense organs), *uparati* (withdrawing of the mind from objects), *titikṣā* (forbearance), *śraddhā* (faith), *samādhāna* (contentment), and *mumukṣatva* (yearning for freedom).

A mongoose is generally kept in a glass-case with a long chain attached to it, so that it may go about freely. When it scents danger as it wanders about, with one jump it goes into the glass-case. So is a Yogi in this world.

—Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,
vol. 6, p. 107.

On the Wrong Scent, Ho!

(On the first visit to the New World from Ancient India)

K.S. RANGAPPA*

Creatures all, knowing, unknowing,
Crave for happiness ceaseless;
Seek and chase scents without let,
Only to find quarry of promising end
A spectral band of mirage-spread!
Yet they lower their head sheepishly down,
Away from the revealing sun
To endless night
And forfeit the ever-shining Light.

If cloying scents of senses all
Would take us to Eldorado indeed,
Seekers of fatter baits
Would soar to higher and higher Heavens.
But alas, the faster ones after fatter baits,
Pulled off from the Kingdom of God,
Choke the quicker to mortal end.

(Please turn over)

* Sri Rangappa is a devotee from Mysore who formerly worked as an editor for the Government of India.

Man, a head above the beast,
If he but spy and see
The inner sun coolly bright,
Would laugh at siren-scents,
Never caught, never held,
Plotting sleepless to hold him tight.

To the thirsty throat
Water, a glass is 'nough;
Two are plenty;
Third is stupid hoard
Of the mindless shrike.

Nature often gently warns
Against excess of every kind
With ailment apt for each surfeit,
And punishing strikes
All heedless breach.

The awakened few, far and rare,
A Ramana, Jesus, Ramakrishna,
Blessed with Inner Light,
Dimless, immortal,
Trail no more fleeting scents,
Hotly pursued by the gullible world. □

Vivekananda's Miltonic Poem: 'Angels Unawares'

(A Look into Its Poetic Technique)

PROF. B.N. SIKDAR

The learned author from West Bengal is a regular contributor to the Prabuddha Bharata. In this article he compares the style used by Swami Vivekananda in his poem Angels Unawares with the style used by Milton in his poems, and finds a marked resemblance.

I

Vivekananda's 'Angels Unawares'¹ is Miltonic in the sense that critics call a good play 'Shakespearean' or a poem with a noble theme in blank verse 'Miltonic'.² This poem is not to be read without a great deal of application. Its title is derived from ancient poetry: *Thou hast made him lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honour (Psalms, 8:5)*. By virtue of its form and content, 'Angels Unawares' is distinct from the lyrics in the nosegay of Swami Vivekananda's other English verses. He used in it a form best described in terms Milton used about his own blank verse: '...the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another not in the jingling sound of like endings....'³ The English poet learnt something of the poetic technique by going through Italian poets like Virgil, Tasso, Camoëus, and others less known (such as Trissino and Parini),

Vivekananda's model was surely John Milton, whose epics like the *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and the dramatic poem in the Greek fashion, *Samson Agonistes*, were included in the English curriculum of his days. His exceptional musical talent caught most ingredients of the epic style, but unfortunately for us he could not dedicate twenty years to the study of classics. Here are two extracts, the first from John Milton, the second from 'Angels Unawares'.

(a) So saying, her rash hand in evil hour
Forth reaching to the Fruit, she
pluck'd, she [ate]:
Earth felt the wound, and Nature
from her seat
Sighing through all her Works
gave signs of woe,
That all was lost.
(*Paradise Lost*, Book IX, lines 780f)

(b) Hope, an utter stranger, came to
him, and spread
Through all his parts, and life to
him meant more
Than he could ever dream, and
covered all he knew,
Nay, peeped beyond his world....
(*'Angels Unawares'*, lines 11-14)

1. See, Swami Vivekananda, *In Search of God and Other Poems* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1968), p. 27; also *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 4, p. 385.

2. e.g. 'Ted Hughes,' says Alan Bold, 'has a "Miltonic sweep".'—in *Cambridge Book of English Verse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 229.

3. Preface to *Paradise Lost*, 'The Verse'.

Even in our first reading of Vivekananda's

poem we could not fail to notice that his lyricism sounds differently in our poem of sixty lines in three movements (17+20+23). The music is sombre and eloquent, not too loud, too insistent, because here he is not haunted by a sense of failure/insufficiency as he was in the odes—'The Song of the Sannyasin', 'The Song of the Free', or 'To the Awakened India'. The 'sages' (line 14) are false prophets against whom all wisdom literature warns us (cf. *Deuteronomy* 13; *Matthew* 23.2 and 13).

II

The Theme

The theme is also a noble one; in Milton it is the Fall and Redemption of Man, Vivekananda deals with three significant and historically important stages in the evolution of Man on earth; the first faint glimmer of religious consciousness, the fall from the primitive innocence to an unbalanced state of mind arising out of gross misuse of power, and his subsequent realization that:

...man alone
Is blest with power to fight and
conquer Fate,
Transcending bounds and laws....
(*'Angels Unawares'*, III, 12–14)

One step after a long one, the poem takes us from its first movement to the time when man's

...passive nature fell, and life appeared
As broad and new, and broader,
newer grew,
Till light ahead began to break, and
glimpse of That
Where Peace Eternal dwells....
(*ibid.*, 15–18)

For millennia man was no 'man', unaware of his own angelic nature (*amṛtasya putrāḥ*—sons of the Immortal ones). The harsh

demands of the body kept him entirely occupied. In fact, the need of bread has been repeatedly acknowledged in oldest religious literature from the Upanishads (*Annam hi prāṇaḥ*) (*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, 7.13.8) down to the New Testament.⁴ The Lord's Prayer: 'Give us this day our daily bread' is not to be mocked at. To realize that man does not live by bread alone, he must first keep his body and soul together. The wolf of Hunger is a savage beast. Pressed by Hunger both Buddha and Jesus had to suspend meditation. That state of existence may not be so irrelevant to our spiritual progress—'Yet the doctrine of evolution has rendered it highly probable that the mind of the philosopher is indissolubly linked to the minds of those barbarous peoples and strange animals.'⁵

III

The whole tissue of Vivekananda's poem is figurative. The three figures represented in three parts are, in my limited view, built round three type-figures: a priest, a tyrant, and an ordinary man of the world; in the midst of the 'maddening whirlpool of life' who is 'born with a healthy frame—but not of will', the three figures rolled into one is Man as he appears in History.

In stage one, man is more acted upon than acting; in the second, he is acting feverishly. Finally, despite his zeal to keep to the path of righteousness, he cannot but slip (since man is fallible and in need of realization of his true self, as *angelic*). The long sentence which opens each part represents the relentless march of Time. Each part opens with the same sound (One), is followed by phrases/words that echo one another:

4. *Book of Job*, 23:12; *Proverbs*, 30:8.

5. Sir J.G. Frazer, 'The Scope and Method of Mental Anthropology' (1921), in *Garnered Sheaves* (London: 1931), p. 226.

- (a) One bending low...
- (b) One drunk with...
- (c) One born with...

The one is a *figura*, typifying a general idea, at the same time acting as an individual not a personified abstraction; the figure operates at a figurative as well as a literal level. And each movement is defined into phases: narrative, reflective and descriptive as in Milton's epics. Each also has moralizing sentiments in the manner of the English poet.

The three divisions are artistically linked, each takes up the story at the point its previous one lays it down. Thus the poet universalizes the theme. The tags at the end (O Blessed Superstition—and others) also make the theme one by the principles of insistence and reiteration. 'Angels Unawares' has a paratactical structure. Man has 'left Mesopotamia and migrated to the land of Cannan'.

IV

Ages pass. Man is now so far advanced in the path of civilization (as he calls it), has grown so powerful with the aid of machines he has invented by his superb intellect that he considers himself all-powerful. He seeks and compels the adoration which is due to God alone. There is an acceleration of rhythmic space (most of the verses in Section II are long, requiring rapid recitation and holding of breath). Love of power as Plato observed is one of the most potent forces in human nature, and its gratification acts as a stimulus to yet wider ambition. This creates a vicious circle. The Scythian Shepherd in Marlowe thought:

And sooner shall the Sun fall from
his sphere
Than Tamberlaine be slain, or
overrun....

The tyrant makes his fellow beings 'crawl like worms'; when man stooped with the

load of life, he did not suffer moral depravity. In Book I of *Paradise Lost*, Milton has represented Evil (Satan) in action (lines 676f). Death in medieval art and drama is usually a skeleton, i.e. only bones, without brain/mind/heart/sometimes, crowned.⁶ In later ages, tyranny has taken uglier forms. Since Vivekananda does not subscribe to the view of man's sinfulness, he considers all forms of evil transitory. The Tyrant in Section II, in time, has his senses clogged, all pleasure turned to pain. Bereft of feeling he becomes a rotting corpse that walks. Miserable he contemplates suicide but cannot die (cf. life-in-death Figure in Coleridge's *The Ancient Mariner*). By and by a deathly paralysis of body and mind overtakes him. In Milton, God Almighty hurls the erring Angel to the bottom of perdition: it required a lot of very precious blood and long suffering by the 'Son of Man' to redeem him. In Vivekananda tyranny discovers its 'kinship with all the human race in groans and tears' and the ridicule of fair weather friends. Without fall there cannot be any rising. Hence: 'O Blessed Misery' ('Angels Unawares', II, 17–19).

V

The final movement of 'Angels Unawares' was separated from the other two by a gap of time in composition; however, thought not written consecutively, it is not an adjunct. In these verses Man's enemy emerges from within him; he is helpless against impulses which can be controlled by a strong will (lines 1–4).

He conquers all who conquers self.
Know this
And never yield,...

(cf. 'The Song of the Sannyasin', lines
18–19)

6. *New Testament: Book of Revelation.*

Salvation in our poet comes from the knowledge that we are not only with humans but even with insentient objects like 'stocks and stones'. The third figure meant well, he wanted to keep aloof from the dirty life around him. Passions suppressed lead to morbidity:

Till morbid grown, his mind
could not see like flies
That seek the putrid part,...

('Angels Unawares', III, 7-8)

He slips into the vortex, the fall was a blessing, the gift of a smiling fortune. Other animals have no moral responsibility, driven as they are by nature/instincts; man alone can choose and decide. He has freedom of choice as the angel in the Bible or in Milton had. Human qualities like empathy, courage, will to serve others in distress, must be cultivated in the midst of society, not away from it. Since we are all angels not aware, (i.e. not fully conscious) of the divinity in each of us, it is our privilege to err and through error and sin gain the power 'to fight and conquer Fate'. Without shunning passivity we could not see light (duty) and have a glimmering view of Jerusalem—'where peace Eternal dwells'. His fall is indeed blessed. A typical Vivekanandian idea drawn from the Vedantic Ocean. The Stoics condemned *apathea* of inertia of mind which is death. When through the forest gloom God's grace became invisible to him and he fell to worshipping earthly objects, the World's age began anew. Now the wheel has come full circle; it did not take much time to transfer illumination from terrestrial to mental plane.

VI

The Verse

To call 'Angels Unawares' 'Miltonic' and yet to say nothing of its versification

would be absurd (despite my abysmal ignorance of it all). In the preface to *Paradise Lost*, the epic points out that the measure he used is 'English heroic verse without rime...which consist only in apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn from one verse into another not in the jingling sound of like endings.' In order to bring Virgil's prosodic pattern in the *Aeneid* more in line with the spirit of the English muse and her followers, the Renaissance and Jacobean poets/playwrights dropped two syllables of Latin hexameters. Each modulated this type (variously called verse-paragraph, sentence-paragraph, or verse-line) according to his individual capability and thus well-nigh exhausted the decasyllable measure's harmonies. However, John Milton achieved for it a grand success for the first time in a very long narrative, *Paradise Lost*, with twelve Books and 10,550 lines. This success made this prosodic tool so popular that Wordsworth used it in his *Prelude* (completed in 1805; published in 1850) when the romantic tide was running strong.

This measure which resembles everyday conversation is easy to write. Bad blank verse strikes the ear so discordantly that Shakespeare derided it (*As You Like It*, Act 4, Scene 1); parts of the *Prelude* are definitely bad.⁷ Matthew Arnold himself a great critic tried this tool in *Sohrab and Rustum* and fared worse than the Lake poet. Only expert handling can make the sense smoothly from one verse to another (technically called *enjambment*, or *run-on*). An essentially stylized diction, it must not be too self-conscious. Long clauses logically blended produce an effect of broadening, forwarding movement. And the diction must fit the solemn theme.

7. e.g. lines 22-6, Book II. In the first quarter of our century T.S. Eliot made brilliant use of its colloquial aspect.

Swami Vivekananda took the bold step when he decided to try his hand in 'Angels Unawares' at the stirring of the English muse.

English blank verse has two syllables less than in Latin or Greek. The classical languages being inflected, their poetry depends entirely on quantity (i.e. length of time taken to pronounce a syllable). The inflection makes the meaning clear. English versification, on the other hand, is neither entirely syllabic nor wholly accentual. There are historical reasons for it not relevant to our present purpose. It allows strange combination like stressing two adjoining syllables, lends more plosive force to adjective than substantives; its fixed word order restricts fluidity; unless the sequence of parts of a verse-sentence be faultless, the meaning becomes hazy. To be impressive, a long narrative must be evocative as well as dramatic.

How John Milton actually produces his 'orchestral' harmonies must largely remain hidden in the mists of genius. One of the chief factors, all eminent critics say, is the framing of the verse-sentence. Scholars differ even on this feature.⁸ A reader familiar with some of these traits of epic or grand style will readily catch several Miltonic features in the diction of 'Angels Unawares', a pattern modified by the monk-poet who had an exceptionally keen ear for music. In our humble attempt to discover how far it was in Vivekananda's power to be 'Miltonic'—in how many ways and to what extent—may perhaps run a safe course if we cite more extracts from their poems and let the reader judge it by himself:

(a) *A high rate of enjambment*

Shall we then live this vile,
the race of Heav'n,
Thus trampled, thus expell'd to
suffer here

Chains and these Torments?
better these than worse
By my advice....

(*Paradise Lost* Bk. II, lines 194–7)

...Till the line
That marks out pain from pleasure,
death from life
And good from what is evil, was
well-nigh wiped from sight—
Saw, one blessed night,...

('Angels Unawares', I, lines 5–8)

(b) *Shifting the position of caesura⁹ frequently within the line to prevent monotony*

Thus saying, // * from her side /
the fatal key
Sad // instrument // of all our woe /
she took.

(*Paradise Lost*, II, lines 871–2)

Hope, // an utter stranger, came to him
/ and spread /
Through all his parts // and life to him
meant // more
Than he could // e // ver dream....

('Angels Unawares', I, lines 11–13)

Note: Caesura may not occur at all in an iambic pentameter line as in 'Remember them who loved me in my youth.' (Wordsworth, 'Michael', line 362)

(c) *Varying the stress/pitch/accent/position and*

8. e.g. C.S. Lewis and A.G. Waddock; F.R. Leavis and B. Rajan.

9. Caesura: *n.* division of foot between two words: a pause in a line of verse (generally near the middle).

* Two obliques represent a longer pause than a single oblique.

its force in a group of verses

...To the nuptial bower
I led her blushing, like the Morn;
all heav'n
And happy Constellations on that hour
Shed their selectest influence;...

(*Paradise Lost*, Bk. 8, 510f)

The stresses on the third syllable of line 1, second of line 2, the first of line 4, and so on are evidently not of the same force.

Then sorrow came—and Wealth and
Power went—
And made him kinship find with all
the human race
In groans and tears,...

('Angels Unawares', II, lines 34–6)

Consider the difference between the force of stress on the first and second, sixth and tenth syllables of line 1, for instance. The basic rhythm of pentameter is however always sustained.

(d) *As in Milton, Vivekananda almost invariably puts in an emphatic first/fourth or sixth syllable in one line. A stressed first syllable is also common in Paradise Lost as well as in 'Angels Unawares': One, That, Saw, But, Hope, Till, Which, That, etc.*

(e) *For emphasizing a point Milton now and then oversteps the limit of the decasyllabic measure, as in: 'Mee though just right, and the First Law of Heav'n...' There are six stresses here instead of the usual five; Vivekananda also follows this manner in lines 2, 4, 8 of Section I alone. He also follows the epic fashion of emphasis by placing two sounds similar to the ear (also dissimilar) as in dark and dismal, tears and groans, harsh and hard, Wealth and Power, deep and strong; and others. He makes the impression of the*

faltering steps of our ancient forefathers in 'bending low with load of life'. The forward movement is checked by heavy stresses. *Saw...* (line 8)—a single syllable takes the force of the entire idea presented; a Miltonic tradition.

It must be pointed out that to detect the harmonies in our poem we have to read it (as every poem, excepting the doggerel) properly emphasizing words as meaning requires and listen with the mind's ear to be able to discover the particular pattern in verse paragraph. A vowel/consonant may derive emphasis by its proximity to caesura—'And cannot cease to *be*, we are at *worst...*' (*Paradise Lost*, II, line 100, italics mine). *Note: Be* here becomes *Beee*; *Worst* derives its additional force from the diphthong *rst*.

(f) *Monosyllabic words separated by punctuation/meaning/and repetition also lend emphasis*

'In groans and tears, *and* though his friends...' (Italics mine). Words like *life, light, death, spread*, and others are repeated at differently spaced intervals by Vivekananda. Emphasis is also obtained by the balancing of ideas:

'That marks out *pain from pleasure, death from life...*' (I, line 6, italics mine)

(g) *There is only one example in our poem of the epic device of Resounding Single lines cut off from the rest of the verses by stops at both ends*

'Then fortune smiled on him...' etc.

(h) We should bear in mind while listening to Vivekananda's English verse that though in general English speech habitually glides from one part of a diphthong to another (as in soap, own, ice, heard, tour,) in a few, both parts tend to be equally emphasized through a breath pause (e.g. Well-nigh, be-

tween maddening, Courage-giving). In rare cases the first stress is optional: undergrowth, impossible, Transcending.

To point out numerous instances of rhetorical embellishments of the kind adopted by epic poets in our poem (e.g. alliteration, oxymoron, juxtaposition of adjective and substantives and others would take too much space (of this Journal) and patience (of a reader). However, there are two important requisites of 'Grand style' without some discussion of which Vivekananda's Miltonic manner cannot even be partially perceived; those qualities are Pictureness and Dramatic tone.

The *Aeneid* opens with a pen picture:

*The morrow's morn had chasen from heaven
the dewy darkness* (line 6)

Book II of *Paradise Lost* presents Satan's track in the ethereal regions (in lines 1024 ff). The description consists of seventy-two words, and nearly twice that number of syllables. The main verb *Pav'd* is separated by eleven words from its substantives. Such a brilliant play of sound and colour we cannot expect from the monk-poet who was writing a poem of sixty verses only and whose attention was fixed on a very terrestrial/mundane affair—Jiva Śiva, the very breath of his life; yet he had the genius to compose a mini picture in:

*One drunk...whirled on his maddening
course,*

('Angels Unawares', II, 1-2)

Between 'One' and 'whirled on' there are thirteen words; the verse sentence has 140 words. The 'One', the first sound in the poem is followed by its verb *saw* after seventy-five words or sounds. The dramatic quality is maintained by a sudden start. weighty verbs like 'saw', 'descend',

'whirled', 'beheld', etc.; personifications in 'Hope', 'Sorrow' and the exclamatory phrases, the most dramatic of which are tags at the close of each section. Milton can lend his epics histrionic elements by introducing addresses, reflexions and rhythm, he had time and space for it. Vivekananda who had neither, found a substitute. His verses are split up as if in detached speech, reversed in movement, altered in momentum also. Consider only the opening section in which a very long line coiling and recoiling like a serpent is halted abruptly with: *Descend to him*, and then comes one of twelve sounds in an entirely different pattern of stress:

He knew not what or wherefrom,
But called it God and worshipped...

The words are here so marshalled that we have to stress not only 'what' 'or wherefrom', but also 'God' and the second syllable of 'worshipped'. The 'Miltonic' grand structure is surely hovering in Vivekananda's mind, but he modifies it, is individual, and re-creates.

VII

Critical honesty requires (and honesty was a virtue very much prized by the foremost among the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna) that it be said, the Indian poet cannot approach the English poet's mastery of harmonies; to speculate whether he could do so granted Milton's time and study would be equally fruitless and idle. And to call 'Angels Unawares' 'Miltonic' is not to equate the two in poetic excellence. Have not eminent critics called Synge's *Riders to the Sea* 'Shakespearean'; or Keat's *Hyperion* 'Miltonic'? Yet the epithet is not to be used casually or lightly. In our case it is intended to mean that he has made such brilliant use of some features of 'grand style' as to reveal a sure grasp of the fundamentals of a noble tradition. English poetry is full of borrow-

(continued on page 372)

Facets of Ego

SWAMI NITYASTHANANDA

Ego is very elusive. In how many ways one's ego makes its presence known to others is brought out in this article by the author, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order. Yet it is hidden from the one possessing the egoistic feeling. The need to attain maturity of ego as also the process involved is highlighted in this thought-provoking article. Says the author, 'full maturity of the ego can be attained successively, first by being established in oneself, then transcending the ego boundary and becoming one with humanity, and finally uniting the individual ego with the universal ego'.

A Study of Man

Human personality is a complex entity with diverse elements manifesting themselves through various activities. Its workings and behavioural pattern baffle our understanding and, as one continues the study, the mystery deepens. Since time immemorial, man has been preoccupied with the study of human beings. The best minds of the world have dedicated their time and energy to unravel the mystery that is man. Hundreds of books have been written and thousands of lectures delivered, yet we have to bow our heads in admiration of this mysterious being, man, who eludes our understanding. In spite of this, the urge to attempt once more this stupendous task is persistent. The very mystery itself draws our attention and inspires us to follow the uncharted path of the study of what appears as the human ego.

The study of ego is an attempt to understand ourselves which is imperative for leading a spiritual life. Our ego plays a prominent role in how we behave in our day to day life. It is interesting and rewarding to follow the workings of the ego behind our activities and thought process. There is an important principle in spiritual life which states that 'our conception of reality depends upon our conception of ourselves', and our conception of ourselves depends

upon our understanding of our inner nature.

Ego, Individuality and Consciousness

What we call the ego is the sense of individuality or self-identity that we find specially manifest in man. We do not find this self-identity in material objects, nor can we attribute individuality or personality to material objects merely because each object has its uniqueness. In plants, even though there is some kind of individuality, we do not find manifest this 'I'-consciousness. In animals, especially in the higher animals, it appears to be more manifest, and yet they lack self-awareness. In man, ego plays a dominant role in manipulating his behavioural pattern. So, ego is associated with the manifestation of consciousness, and the greater the manifestation, the greater is the role of ego.

Even in man, this ego gradually grows as he progresses from childhood to manhood. Small children identify themselves with their surroundings, and consequently they possess little self-identity. Small babies hardly respond to the bad or good treatment of others, for they cannot recognize others as separate entities. Because of this lack of 'I' sense, they are least affected by scorn from others, and their weeping when chastened is only a mechanical response to stimulus

rather than a reaction of the ego. As the child grows, he progressively separates himself more and more from the surroundings and identifies himself as a being, a distinct individual. By the time he reaches adolescence, his ego gets sufficiently crystallized. We generally notice that older children often intently look at their faces in the mirror while combing their hair, etc.; they also become more and more particular about the clothes they wear. This behaviour is not noticed in young ones. Young people are easily irritated, their ego being always ready to react, either positively or negatively as the situation demands of them, in response to every circumstance that presents itself. On reaching physical maturity, the ego should also mature, which however does not usually take place. Man becomes full grown physically, but his ego may remain stunted. This immature ego is compared to a half-filled pitcher which makes a lot of noise when one walks carrying it on the head, whereas, the mature ego is compared to a pitcher full to the brim and therefore silent.

Maturity of Ego

An important sign of maturity is self-sufficiency, the ability to remain poised in oneself without depending on anything outside. One must be able to retain one's individuality and uniqueness, not allowing oneself to be swept away by the current of circumstances. This is a sign of real maturity. But 'the courage to be one's own natural self is quite a rare thing.... Consciously or unconsciously, we are all actors in this life, playing to the audience in a part and style approved by them'.¹

Swami Vivekananda gave the utmost importance to the development of individu-

ality. In a letter to Alasinga in 1895 he observes, 'Individuality is my motto. I have no ambition beyond training individuals up.'² Frederick Peris humorously remarks, 'The crazy person says, "I am Abraham Lincoln", and the neurotic says, "I wish I were Abraham Lincoln", and the healthy person says, "I am I, and you are you".'³

Ego and Egotism

We have to make a distinction between what is ordinarily called egotism, which is injurious, and the ego or I-sense which is one of the basic structures of our personality. Pride, conceit, arrogance, etc. are different forms of egotism that sully the sublimity of human personality, and form part of the class of six inimical traits (*Ari-ṣaḍvarga*). The ego, on the other hand, is the coordinating principle in our personality which appropriates every action to itself and gives self-identity to our personality. This distinction can be illustrated by the following example: Suppose, I sweep the floor of a particular room, and someone comes later on and enquires who has done it, I plainly say that I have done it. Again, suppose I compose a beautiful piece of poetry, and someone asks whose composition that poem is. Now, my face brightens up and I say, with a sense of pride, that I did it. The mere admission of performing an action is not tainted, but taking pride or boasting about it or feeling conceited over it is harmful. The same thing can be said about the possession of money, power, etc. each of which is an *upādhi* (a limiting adjunct) of our personality..

The ego or I-sense which gives self-identity to the personality is to be properly developed by leading a meaningful life with meaningful interpersonal relationships and by constant exercise of self-awareness, i.e., maintaining the I-consciousness while en-

1. Lin Yutang, *Importance of Living*.

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 7, p. 487.

3. Quoted by Muriel James and Dorothy Joneward in *Born to Win*, p. 16.

gaged in different activities of body, mind and speech. Otherwise, the immature ego will create many troubles, making the individual's life miserably subservient to external factors. We have to tackle this problem of ego development to make headway in spiritual life. So, it is interesting and rewarding to know in how many different ways the ego makes its presence felt, overtly or covertly, spreading its tentacles all through our daily occupations. We can broadly classify these manifestations of ego into four categories.

Parasitic Tendency

Some people try to boost their ego by associating themselves with prominent personalities in society. Their ego depends upon some outstanding persons whose association makes them feel, 'I am somebody'. They feel pain when alone, and cannot tolerate being unrecognized. It is a very painful experience to be a non-entity or inconsequential. So, they always expect that someone should come seeking for them; this sustains their ego. Others may have the peculiar habit of keeping all the keys of different sections in the house or an institution in their personal custody so that others will have to come to them asking for the keys, and this sense of importance gives them joy. They may also wish to receive many letters and to this end they keep writing to as many people as they can. Another weakness in them is dependence on others' opinion about themselves, since they cannot make any objective self-appraisal. If others opine that they are good, they complacently consider themselves to be so, overlooking the darker side of their own personality. Those who feel a sort of emptiness in themselves and suffer from inferiority complex, develop this kind of tendency to somehow sustain their ego. They like to fill their inner vacuum with external approbation. They try to build their image with the help of external resources, being unable to tap their own resources

within, akin to parasites that survive drawing sustenance from the host tree.

Projecting Tendency

There are some who try to project their ego in different ways to make their presence felt in a given situation. Sometimes they talk loudly to draw the attention of others. In conversations with others they try to dominate others by thrusting their ideas with raised voice. They seldom listen to others, and will be eagerly waiting for an opportunity to cut in while others are talking! If they are not competent to speak on a subject under discussion, they somehow try to say something even if it be irrelevant to make their presence felt, or try to divert the discussions to some other subject on which they consider themselves talented. They are mainly interested in such activities which can draw public attention, and try to avoid such activities that would fail to elicit public admiration. They start some work with great enthusiasm and attain sparkling success capturing the attention of all around them, and when the initial enthusiasm wanes away and the attention of the people is diverted, they are no more interested in that work, and even if they are constrained to continue the task, they do so with a grumble.

Some persons prefer to be conspicuous by being absent! They find pleasure in being remembered by absenting themselves when their presence is merely required to share the honour with others. If special honour is reserved for them, they are sure to be present. Thus sometimes even so-called humility can be an expression of ego.

When a group photograph is to be taken, generally everyone tries to see that he will make a good picture. When looking at a group photograph, such persons tend to look for their own picture first. They give so much importance to themselves, whatever may be their social status. And there are

certain strange people who try to be prominent by not being photographed!

Begging Tendency

As the body wants food to sustain itself, so also the ego wants a different kind of food: love, sympathy, praise, recognition, etc. There is nothing wrong in expecting others' love, sympathy, etc. but some desperately hanker for such things, which is a sure sign of inner emptiness. Sometimes they suffer from the agony of not being loved or praised sufficiently, in spite of receiving love and recognition from others. They want to be appreciated for every small act they do. They try to grab the credit for doing something, whether they duly deserve the credit or not. Some have the habit of criticizing themselves before others, to induce others to appreciate them in response.

When we fail to draw spiritual sustenance from within, we long for love, admiration, etc. from others as a poor substitute to it. In the same manner, some people try to hang on to some power or position to feed their ego. As parents nurse their child, we fondly nurse the ego by feeding it with the food of love, appreciation, etc., and protect it from all criticism.

The man of mature ego neither criticizes nor admires himself, neither expects recognition nor shuns it. He has the dignified way of receiving recognition without being inflated. In conversation and speeches, he seldom refers to himself.

Obstinate Tendency

Obstinacy is the sign of immature ego which tries to assert itself by fondly holding on to certain wrong views, opinions, actions, etc., without yielding to others, even if these are correct. People of this type always try to do things according to their own plans and decisions without giving heed to others's

suggestions. They don't possess the magnanimity to respect and weigh the views of others, which amounts to shelving the support of their ego. Having no such inner support, they stubbornly cling to certain views as a prop. Such people generally refuse to be corrected, and always try to justify their actions, be they right or wrong.

Attaining the Maturity of Ego

What we narrated above are some of the manifestations of the immature ego present in almost all the people in varying degrees depending upon their state of evolution. Maturity of ego can be attained through a gradual spiritual growth. This is a three-step process: (1) Transcending the multiplicity of ego and becoming established in oneself, (2) Transcending the boundaries of one's own ego, and (3) Uniting the individual ego with the universal ego.

Transcending the Multiplicity of Ego

Man is usually not a single personality; he has many conflicting, contradicting and sometimes cooperating personalities within himself, each having its own alterego attached to it. He decides one thing at this moment and changes it the very next moment. He exhibits different facets of his personality in different fields of involvements. At home, perhaps he is a tyrant; but when he goes to the temple, he is deeply religious; when he sits in the shop, he is a shrewd businessman; and when he is in the club, he is friendly with all. This multiplicity of ego hampers the harmonious growth of personality. There is no single dominant 'I' which effects the integration of personality, coordinates different facets of personality, and makes one's behaviour subservient to one over-riding ideal in life. That is why the ego is to be developed and the first step is to be established firmly in oneself.

Transcending the Boundaries of One's Ego

After becoming established in oneself, one has to transcend the boundaries of one's ego and try to see oneself in others. As H.A. Overstreet puts it, 'A person is not mature until he has both the ability and the willingness to see himself among others and do unto others as he would have them do to him.' Our ego must be expanded to include within its fold the whole of humanity. There is a beautiful and popular saying in Sanskrit (*Hitopadeśa*, *Mitralābhah*, śloka 72):

अयं निजः परो वेति गणना लघुचेतसाम्।
उदारचरितानां च वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्॥

*Ayam nijah paro veti
ganana laghucetasām;
Udāracaritānām ca
vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam.*

He is one's own or he is another's is the consideration of the mean-minded persons. However to the liberal-minded the entire earth is one family.

If one is firmly established in oneself, not being alienated from oneself, one will eventually have the capacity to look upon the whole world as one's very own. The famous psychologist Erich Fromm says: 'As long as any fellow-being is experienced as fundamentally different from myself, as long as he remains a stranger, I remain a stranger to myself too.'⁴

A plant kept under the shade will not grow to its full stature. So is the case with the man who is confined to his body-mind complex. He cannot attain to full maturity, for his scope is limited, being constrained to function within the narrow limits of his ego, which suffers, as it were, from malnutrition,

because its resources are limited due to its confinement within the narrow boundaries of personality structure. The man who is hungry craves for food, and he cannot tolerate others taking food without sharing it with him. Similar is the case with the man whose ego suffers from malnutrition. He craves for name, recognition, power, position, etc., and cannot tolerate others enjoying them. The well-known psychologist Carl Jung says, 'The ego is ill for the very reason that it is cut off from the whole and has lost its connection with mankind and with the spirit.'⁵

Uniting the Individual Ego with the Universal Ego

Sri Ramakrishna makes a distinction between ripe and unripe ego. He says: "The servant ego", the "Knowledge ego", or the "devotee ego", may be called the "ripe ego". It is different from the "unripe ego", which makes one feel: "I am the doer. I am the son of a wealthy man. I am learned. I am rich. How dare anyone slight me?" A man with an unripe ego cherishes such ideas.'⁶ Here Sri Ramakrishna is indicating that the ego associated with God is ripe ego, that is to say, the ego becomes ripe when it is related to the whole, and when it is associated with worldly objects, it is unripe. When the part is dissociated from the whole, it suffers, it withers away, just as the branch of a tree cut off from the main tree. So, the individual ego must ultimately be associated with the universal ego, i.e. God. Then this individual ego draws all its sustenance from the universal ego, and it no more depends upon external things to feed itself.

As one progresses in spiritual life, as
(Continued on page 372)

4. Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, p. 162.

5. Carl Jung, *Modern Man in Search of A Soul*, p. 141.

6. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1985), p. 860.

Adventures of a Layman in the Realm of Vedanta

TAPOBROTO BHARADWAJ

(Continued from the previous issue)

Revolution and Evolution

Rousseau wrote against social injustices and we had the French Revolution. Karl Marx wrote against the economic exploitation of the poor by the rich and for communism we had the Russian Revolution. People sacrificed life in hundreds of thousands, and millions of people went through extreme suffering; and surely one may hope that these were not in vain. But social injustice and economic exploitation continue. Our model does not promise utopia. In nature where resources are limited, all transactions leave behind a zero net gain, and all development and improvement are at the cost of others. If we analyse the events related to the revolutions, we find that causes of the failure lie at the very root of the events. The people who gave leadership and held power during the revolution were not free from the corruption and moral degradation that are responsible for the social injustice and the exploitation. They had greed for power and wealth and no deep respect for life or moral values.

Our world or Jagat is a big whirlpool, always vibrant and clean, with all kinds of animals, including men, and the most spectacular event here is the sight of life evolving to the Godhead: the Spirit getting released from the yoke of nature. Our concern is the development of the individual, because it is the individual who makes the society. It is said that the people get the government that they deserve. From political consideration also it is, therefore, most important to develop the people at the individual level so

that everybody is enlightened and conscious about his responsibility.

The Whirlpool of Humanity

There is no use in trying to find the direction humanity is moving because it may change any moment in the whirlpool, but a few things are clear. The old hierarchies have broken down and there is a big force as if trying to bring entire humanity under one large commercial oligarchy, the population working like a machine consuming and producing consumables; everything for the profit of the oligarchy. The other values, like respect for good people for their honesty and character, respect for the wise on account of their superior knowledge and experience, for the kings on account of their heroism, valour and sacrifice, for the artists, poets, dancers, musicians on account of their creative genius, are now weighed in terms of money. There is a fierce competition in the electronic media for advertisement of wares, soft and hard, to draw the fancies of the people of all ages and culture by titillating display of colour and sound, and every day new records are created in this race in bad taste, bad morality and vulgarity.

If there is no criteria in deciding good and bad other than convenience and profit margin on the one side and the police force on the other, society loses the power to mould character and control unsocial behaviour. People miss the hierarchy of values like honesty, wisdom and good conduct. An individual is now under great stress because his unrestrained desires and cravings for

money and power and his sexual urges are all the time frustrated and he finds no moral or spiritual value in exercising self-control and leading an honest life. In earlier times, the followers of the heroic paths of the Tantric religious school would expose themselves to temptations like alcohol, forbidden goods, and sex in order to overcome these temptations. Now everybody is exposed to the temptations without the resources to acquire them and the strength to overcome them. Starting from the day a child is born, until he is dead, desire drives him relentlessly like a slave of nature to acquire more and more of objects for pleasures and power. A child is loaded with books many times his weight and he drudges through life with this burden for twenty years to get a pass for a job. After many trials and long wait he lands up with a job and again drudges for another forty years from morning to evening for a living. In the meantime he marries, has children and struggles for a miserable existence. May be, the salary he gets is not sufficient to satisfy the desires of his family; his job does not get the appreciation it deserves, his wife and children do not reciprocate his feelings, his family breaks up. Whatever may happen, it is rare that a person finds fulfilment in the *samsāra*, worldly life, he creates. It is in the very nature of human life that happiness and unhappiness, good and bad, come in endless cycles. Advancement in one direction in life inevitably brings a lag or downfall in another direction; and we are left with the bitter taste in our mouth and a question: 'Is it worth living like this?'

*Karma is Conservation Principle plus
Faith in the Triumph of the Spirit*

Karma in the Vedas is a most powerful concept in Indian thinking. There may be schools which do not accept any Deity per se, who only hold to Truth, but every philosophical-religious system of Indian origin accepts the principle of Karma, the law of

cause and effect which extends even into moral and intellectual life. In a religious life, there are many rituals to be performed and these have beneficial effects for our present existence as well as in the life beyond. Again, in leading a life it is impossible not to cause harm sometimes to others. For example, when we breathe, eat and move about, we undoubtedly kill many kinds of microscopic life. Such involuntary sinful actions have harmful results in this life, and in the life to come they may bear fruits also. Life itself is a mixture of good and bad actions and the Karma Principle of the Veda says that we will enjoy the fruits of all our actions, good or bad. Of course religion enjoins purificatory ceremonies if someone commits an offense. The rules give instructions about some sacrifices, fasting and other rituals for atonement or purification. Is it then possible that a Robin Hood can kill rich wicked people and distribute their wealth among poor people and this expiates the bad action of killing?

The Karmavada says no. You will suffer the bad results of your sins and will enjoy the good results of your beneficial deeds. There is another proposal for evading the cycles of Karma. A person can avoid committing sins and do only good to others. He will also carry out all the expiatory rites for 'sins' committed inadvertently, arising out of following life's natural functions. In this manner he will avoid suffering and enjoy eternal heaven. This however is not sound reasoning but only wishful utopian dreaming. Even in heaven, it is said, there are higher and lower beings and a person is a victim of jealousy of others who are better placed. Even the gods are often jealous of more powerful devas or demons. Where there is good, there will be bad; where knowledge, there will be ignorance; where happiness, unhappiness. These are basic facts of nature. So long as we are under the sway of nature we will be governed by her rules, whether in the heaven, or on earth, or

in the hell. Vedanta places great importance to the life on earth as it is here and here alone that we can work, make our destiny and advance even to surpass the denizens of heaven.

There is no Death

A life may be conceived as a conservative 'system' going through changes in time, the body being only one of the adjuncts of the Self or Soul. It is said that Brahman Itself has entered into the body to enjoy the world and is its Soul. The body lives because there is a soul. In the ultimate reality, the soul and Brahman are non-different. The soul identified with the body is called a jiva. We see the gross body enjoying the physical world. When the body sleeps the jiva remains awake and goes on enjoying life by creating images of real life in the dream state. Because we dream in our mind the physical rules are relaxed and distances and time lose their meaning. In deep sleep the jiva is at peace with the soul and does no work. In Vedanta the jiva is said to live at five levels: the gross, the vital, the mental, the intellectual and the aesthetic. These levels are not distinct but are intermeshed. We can see the gross body. The other bodies are also composed of matter, though of subtle or fine form and therefore invisible. All, however, are subject to the laws of nature. In transmigration the *jīvātmā* (embodied soul) leaves the body in the most subtle form and carried with it the bundles of recorded past impressions of actions and reactions accumulated over many lives.

The bundle of karma in dormant potential form that the jiva would carry, therefore, contains assortment of all kinds of wares, like 'building a hospital', 'kindness to suffering people', 'control of desires', 'faith in God', 'charities', 'demolishing a temple', 'killing of people', etc. For the jiva there are innumerable possibilities and all these possibilities are different states for the jiva. He (the embodied soul) takes a new birth in a

new environment, say in a rich business family, and enjoys that life, committing many sins and also doing many charitable deeds so that when he casts away his body he will be ready for a new birth with a new will.

The Trajectory of Jiva:

Karma, Anushaya and Charana

Karma, Anushaya, and Charana, meaning action, 'potential'-action, and 'conduct', respectively, have been mentioned in the Vedas (See *Brahma-Sūtras*, 3.1.8—9) as being the cause of a particular birth. There are very interesting discussions in the Vedanta on this subject. It has been shown that the three terms really mean the same as cause and effect.

In the physical world we know karma as action, because it is visible, but there are many karmas which are not so visible, like say, wishing the well-being of all people. *Charana* or conduct is also broadly recognizable. A good man is known by his lifelong conduct. Likewise, a tyrant is also known by his dealings with his dependents, subordinates and loved ones. Karma shows the *charana* and also shapes it. When a person continues to do a kind of karma, say good action, an act of charity or kindness, it influences his thoughts and behaviour. Thus *charana* (conduct) is an index of *karma* (action).

When a man dies, the soul carries the impressions of all his actions on earth to other planes and he enjoys the result of his past good actions in heaven or suffers the results of his past bad actions in hell. He then gets ready to be born again on earth with a net-potential karma (*anushaya*). If the person had done good work in his earlier life, he is born to a higher status. Inversely, if he had performed bad deeds, he would be born to a lower status.

The interesting point of this discussion is that death and birth are not breaks. People asked in every age: what happens after death? Vedanta tells that a man is born to

fulfil his desires at the point of death in the earlier life. The death and a new birth are the two sides of the same point and it is not surprising that King Bharata would be born as a fawn. At the point of death, all his being was at-one with his pet deer and he got a deer birth in his new body. When a man is about to die, the work he has done during the life has been added to the potential he was born with and this gives a new direction and a new potential for his next life. His desires only indicate his new position.

Karma Principle and Passivity

It used to be said that the Indian people were passive in their attitude toward life because of their belief in determinism. Also that Acharya Shankara did damage to the people by spreading his thesis of the supremacy of Knowledge and the ineffectiveness of work for realizing the Ultimate Reality or Brahman. But facts show that these judgements were biased. Sri Shankaracharya lived for only thirty-two years and during this short span he achieved more than thousands could have achieved together, even if they lived the full span of 120 years of life. In terms of work in the worldly sense alone, his achievement in the spiritual field is almost beyond our comprehension. His writings alone remain till today the most authentic references on Vedanta for both his followers and detractors. He travelled the whole country (India), from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari and Taxila to Kamrup, visiting the centres of religion, discussing with people of all different sects, restoring and reconstructing temples, and he established the four centres for the four Orders of monks, at Sringeri, Dwaraka, Jyoshimath in the Himalayas, and at Govardhana Puri. His life could in nowise be called a lesson to the people in passivity!

Karma and the action-principles leave no place for inaction or passivity, even for a monk, although the monk has no social obligations. Passivity, or inertia, or selfish iso-

lation and indifference to the welfare of fellow men and the environment are not rewarded with devotion to God or attainment of higher values. If there were observed at all in India's history, it must have been due to an adverse historical situation where the population was unable or did not have the means to fight against the prevailing poverty, illiteracy, injustice or political corruption. On the other hand, it is surprising how in the face of such difficult situations the people could retain their resilience and basic human values.

In Vedanta there is no false optimism. It does not preach any technique by which in the worldly life one can live happily for ever and ever. The conservation principle is a law of nature and the earth on which we live has limited resources. Everybody has to take this reality into consideration. Any realistic approach would, therefore, advise action and its reverse to be balanced in life. We have seen how the reckless optimism of the technologists has brought the environment congenial to life on earth to the verge of ruins during the last two hundred years, and we wish they had taken the warning of Vedantic holism seriously. The earth and the natural wealth we have been heir to is not for mere consumption and it should not be forgotten that we ourselves are a part of the earth and its ecology.

The determinism of the conservation principle is not Vedanta. Vedanta interprets the human existence with these principles and teaches the spiritual way to break the chain of the eternal cycles of nature. It also gives faith in every heart that our fate is our own creation: We are what we will to be. It is the divine right of everybody to transcend the natural limitations and rise to the realm of pure spirit.

Karma of a Liberated Person is not Liberated

There is an interesting discussion in the Vedanta about what happens to potential and kinetic karmas once a person is liberated

and all his bondage to matter are removed. The free soul is no longer driven by the desires and as long as he lives on earth he is guided by the will of God. But the forces of actions and reactions are indestructible. We have seen that even at the stage of the annihilation of the creation when all elements have been reduced to their most subtle form and there is complete equilibrium and isotropy, the seed of actions remain and ultimately cause a new creation.

The bundles of actions is discarded by the liberated person at the instant of his enlightenment and this is described poetically in the Upanishads. In one place it is said that the liberated soul is approaching the throne of God and has to cross the river Viraja, the river of cleaning. On this side of the river he leaves behind all his attributes, properties, sins and good deeds. His heirs receive the properties, his enemies receive the sins, and his friends receive his good deeds. The receiving ends, in some ways, must have earned the bequeathal by their actions so that their books of accounts are also balanced. We may not understand all the processes involved in this mathematics but the spirit is quite clear. The vortex of the world in infinite dimensions will continue for ever and ever and the living being will get trapped in and released from this vortex without leaving a ripple. It is like a giant river flowing and many forms of lives, from a tiny plankton to a human being, enjoy the river in many ways but the river flows without being much affected by the lives.

Soul is Atomic

versus

Soul is All-encompassing

People are never satisfied. They want more of everything: wealth, honour, friends, health, happiness. There is one exception, Ask anybody, if he needs a little more intellect, and he will be outraged. You will find all people are quite pleased with the intellect they have. The inner mental faculty (*manas*,

buddhi) lumped in the name of intellect is responsible for perception, thinking, memory, wisdom and knowledge; and is the proxy for the self. A challenge on the adequacy of the intellect is perceived by the self as an attack on its security and is therefore instinctively resisted. We cannot know the self except through the mental faculty which can only see the ego, rather than the self. The problem here is that the self is the subject as the knower and is also the object of the knowledge. The self perceived by our intellect is the ego and is at the root of 'I'-ness and 'my'-ness. I fight for my interest. The ego separates one from others whereas the self unites. A man feels only isolated, crushed, insignificant and nothingness when he is so separated and is out of step with the others. In this mode, the soul of a living being is atomic. Vedanta speaks about this soul as one hundredth of one hundredth of the tip of a hair. The soul is indeed so tiny. In transmigration this atomic soul, the *jivatma*, leaves the body and goes to heaven and hell. As the subtle body and part of nature, it goes through the cycles of birth and death. The devotees consider God the almighty as the lord of the creation, themselves as small, and always pray to God for his grace and favour.

The Vedas also speak about the soul as bigger than the universe, all-pervading, and without any limit. 'The Being (*sat*) was there before this [the creation], the one without a second...unborn, unchangeable, everlasting. It does not die on the destruction of the body.' The identity of the jiva with Brahman is the ultimate teaching of the Vedas. Like the rivers flowing from all directions which meet at the ocean and lose their identity as rivers, the names and shapes of all life's forms shed their limited identity and meet at Brahman. The apparent difference between the jiva and Brahman disappears at liberation and the jiva recognizes that it was always non-different from Brahman and life was only a drama it was playing.

In our model both views are accepted. Jiva, being a part of the phenomenal world, is indeed atomic, going through cycles of births and deaths and enjoying the pleasures and the pains that the world offers. But we have seen earlier that the changing world merges into the primal energy and does not have any reality as the world once the changes stop. The atomicity, therefore, is only a passing experience, it is an imaginary artifice for the sport of the God, and the Soul is always one with Brahman.

Sri Ramakrishna described this concept in his inimitable way: Imagine a continuum of water all around—on all sides, up above and down below, and a jar full with the same water is floating in the water. It is the same water both inside and outside but the jar is different from the ocean. The jar is the jiva and its wall is the ego. When the ego vanishes the jiva becomes the infinite ocean. But so long as the jiva lives, however enlightened, it is by the will of God that the thin wall, an ego of knowledge or love remains to serve the purpose of the Creator.

A layman lives in the world of action and happenings and he must remember that there is no escape from the action principles. It would be a falsehood if he assumes the role of a liberated person. He should accept the atomicity of his soul and pray to God that all his limitations are removed and he can become united with Him. In Indian tradition, Hanuman is taken as the model of service toward God, first in devotion and finally in the path of knowledge. His feelings, as he told to Sri Rama, show the attitude of the devotee: 'O Rama, I am your servant when I consider myself as a body, I am your part when I consider myself as a jiva, and I am Yourself when I consider myself as the Soul. These are my firm convictions.'

Limits of Science

We both feel and see solid and liquid matter. We may not see gaseous matter and

energy but we feel them. Some forms of energy and matter, like potential energy and the electron, do not come within the direct reach of our senses and are known by their effects indirectly. These various forms of matter and energy are called in Vedanta and other Indian schools of thought *bhūtas* or 'states', and are classified in five categories: e.g., solid, liquid, fire (energy), gas, and space (*ākāsha*). *Bhūtas* stand for the gross states but it is inferred that all these states have atomic or very subtle states also, called *tanmātrās*, or *bhūta tanmātrās*. Science does not go beyond solid, liquid, gas and plasma states.

Life is also a State or Bhūta of Existence

In the world both living and non-living co-exist and have their interactions. The behaviour of non-living matter is simpler and can be more accurately formulated by the scientific principles. The behaviour of living beings is more complex and we do not know the laws governing human behaviour, particularly when they are creative, as in music, painting, literature, in aesthetic or religious practices like prayer, sacrifice, meditation, etc. But we have seen earlier that both living and non-living matter follow the basic laws of nature: all work within the Karma Principles. In the realm of science all events are deterministic and there is no place for free will. Now we ask: 'Is there a way to ensure that the Karma principles are not operative?' The question, what is Brahman, was raised in a seminar in the court of the legendary King Janaka, and the proceedings of that seminar have been recorded and preserved and made a part of the Vedas, the *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. A relevant part (III.viii.1—11) of the Upanishad for our discussion is a spirited dialogue between Gargi and Yajnavalkya, two of the foremost sages and knowers of Brahman. Gargi was asking questions and Yajnavalkya was replying to her.

In the first question Gargi wanted to

know wherein, i.e. pervaded by what, are the heavenly bodies like the sun and the stars, above and below the earth and everything in between that we can identify now, that were there in the past and that will be there in the future, held from all around. Yajnavalkya said in reply that it was *Ākāśa*, Space, which held them all around.

In the second question Gargi wanted to know wherein is the space held from all around (what is space pervaded by)? Yajnavalkya said that it was *Akṣara*, the Immutable, which held the *Ākāśa* from all around. We may recall that we had already identified one immutable principle and we called it the Primal Energy. We could not ascribe much attribute to it as it was not knowable by any or all of the sense organs that we have. But Yajnavalkya knew the *Akṣara* by his supersensuous power and described its attributes in the seminar. We will make a small digression before we come back to *Akṣara*.

The Vedas have no role in developing the science of physics. They only show how the world is related to Brahman. People feel secure with their feet resting on the solid earth and do not like to build castles in the air. But the solid bodies that were in the past are not there now, the bodies we can now identify will not always be here, and there will be new bodies in the future. Vedas assure us that they are all there in the space. The Akasha is not nothingness, all matter and energy ultimately reduce to Akasha. Further, there is Akshara holding the Akasha and this remains unaffected even when everything else changes.

Yajnavalkya said what the wise people speak about Akshara—it is not gross, it is not subtle, not short, not long, not red, not wet, not shadow, not darkness, not air, not space, not associated, not aesthetic, not moving, not speech, not mind, not bright and not life. Under the rule of Akshara, he told Gargi, were the sun and the moon held in place; under its regulation the time and its

divisions are controlled. Under its rule the rivers originating from the white mountains flow to the east, west or other directions. It is its rule that people honour the bestowers of gifts, the gods love the sacrifices offered to them, and the fathers (in heaven) love those offering food to the people. The people who do not know Akshara but offer sacrifices, butter and other materials, according to the Vedic rituals, or who undertake austerity, are not liberated thereby but go through cycles many thousands or years. They, not knowing the Akshara, are objects of pity. And the people who leave this world after knowing the Akshara are the knowers of Brahman and such persons are not bound by the Karma principles. And finally, the Akshara can see what we cannot see, can hear what we cannot hear, can think what we cannot think and can know what we cannot know. It is the Infinite. Other than Akshara, there is nobody to see, hear, think or know. Akshara, the Primordial fine or subtle matter due to which the gross forms of matter we know, along with the sense organs in their subtle and gross forms, come into existence, is beyond the purview of Science.

Brahman

Brahman is the cornerstone of our model and we have alluded to it in many contexts. The Vedas and subsidiary religious texts speak volumes about Brahman and Its attributes, but words cannot describe something which is beyond mind and thought. Let us give an example of the Vedas trying to describe Brahman:

Like a golden draping
Like a flock of shining lambs
Like the fire worms twinkling
Like the flame of fire
Like the lotus blossoming
Like millions of lightnings flashing
together

Now, therefore, the instructions
(of the Vedas):
This is not It, this is not It.
There is no limit to this,
There is nothing greater than this.

The human mind cannot grapple with the limitless and can only make attempts to describe the experience of it in faltering language by hints and by bits of imageries. The salt doll determined to measure the ocean is relaying his notes as he approaches his task, first a broad view, then some details, but alas! he fades out, before he could give us the final picture, in the ocean.

The *Brahma Sutras* were written by Acharya Badarayana Vyasa. There are a number of commentaries on the *Brahma Sutras*, one of the most famous being that of Acharya Shankara. There are explanatory notes by renowned scholars on these commentaries, and altogether a large volume of literature is available on the *Brahma Sutras*. By study of this literature one may become a great scholar, but may not be any closer to the realization of Brahman. We will discuss some of the broad approaches to Brahman in Vedanta.

1. Wise people adopt the path of discrimination or knowledge and develop a deep conviction that Brahman without any qualification or attribute is the only reality that exists. They shed the last trace of egoism and after long austerity and practice get a direct perception of Brahman in *samādhi*, deep absorption of mind in meditation. Treading the path of discriminative reasoning to determine the Real (Brahman) from the unreal (the other than Brahman) is said to be as difficult as walking on the razor's edge.

2. We live in the world of actions and happenings which are all within the realm of qualified Brahman, i.e. Brahman qualified by attributes we give to It. There is only one Brahman, however, and it is the same Brah-

man, whether we consider it qualified or unqualified (with or without attributes). There are many advantages in approaching Brahman as 'qualified' and as the Personal God, who is endowed with qualities, because we can worship Him, pray to Him, meditate on Him. This is the path of devotion. A devotee may also desire knowledge of God and, experiencing His sweetness, to become united with Him, and God will surely fulfil his desire. A devotee however rarely asks for knowledge, he only cares for the love of God.

3. For most of us, who identify the body with the Self, it is natural to follow the path of Action to reach God. It is natural to consider God as an entirely separate principle. God is endowed with all power, knowledge, and qualities and is completely free of any defects or limitations. By the performance of good deeds selflessly and offering the results of such actions to God, one will get His grace and on death live with glory in His presence.

In our model, these various approaches to Brahman are accepted as equally valid. They are not contradictory or conflicting but are complementary. One can follow all or any one of them, depending on one's taste or ability. In all cases, however, one requires faith and devotion, and mere learning without sincere practice does not lead one anywhere.

God is One—

Religions are Different Paths to the One Goal

The *R̥g-Veda* said: 'The Being is one, but the wise people call Him by different names.' The history of humanity is replete with stories of religions fighting to establish their greatness. These fights have nothing to do with God—these are struggle for political and economic supremacy, although both sides in the fights shout the name of God of their own religion. Vedanta preaches the God who is the fountainhead of all religions and considers all religions as different ex-

pressions of the same spirit, the differences being only contingent on the local conditions. Our model has a number of specific observations in this regard:

1. A number of religions were there at all times in history and we may accept it as the will of God that He will be worshipped by people in different ways. We should be happy in our mind that it is our very own God that is so dear to all and that they all worship Him in different manners.

2. Religion is not armchair philosophy and it is always based on faith, which in a sense is primitive and admits the limitations of rationality.

3. God and Truth stand on their own. Everything else endures to the extent that it keeps close to God and Truth. We should therefore welcome free and open discussions on religion, faith, God, and His prophets. We find intolerance on the part of established churches against any adverse criticism and hear that such 'onslaughts on the faith' will erode the foundation of religion. God is the foundation of all and faith is the most precious gift of God. Therefore we need not get upset by any criticism.

4. Religion is often seen in the wrong light of being in opposition to human rights, spirit of enlightenment and scientific enquiry, liberal social movements and international friendship. It is the responsibility of all faiths to remove this misunderstanding about religion. Religion has its essential function and its non-essential functions. Social values are changeable with time. Religion therefore should always be wary of joining in the causes which are politically or otherwise motivated by parochial interests. In case of doubt in such issues, wise people who are respected for their honesty and judgement should review the problem and take decisions in line with the values and ethics held up by the best men of the society.

5. And we should respect the religions and culture of other people.

Measuring the Infinite

Mathematics does not always go well in religion, and there are a few fundamental or 'quantifying' statements in the Vedas which are interesting. One of the most well-known statements is about the infinite nature of God: 'Take the whole; from the whole, what is left is again the whole.' Another very interesting mathematical statement is an attempt to give an indication of the measure of joy experienced by the knowers of Brahman. The unit of the measurement is defined before we take our first step and this is called human *ananda*, *ananda* standing for joy. A young person is honest and well-read, he is disciplined, healthy and strong. The earth full with all wealth belongs to him. The *ananda* of this prince among men is called the 'unit of human-*ananda*'.

Then the Vedas describe a number of stages leading to the Hiranyagarbha Brahman which are the measures of joy experienced by the various denizens of heaven, like the divine minstrels, the human Gandharvas, the Deva-Gandharvas, the fathers in the eternal heaven, Born Devas, Action Devas, plain Devas, the gods: Indra, Brihaspati, Prajapati, and so on. Each of the higher states has a hundred times more *ananda* than the preceding one. At this rate the Brahmananda works out to ten to the twentieth power (10^{20}) human-*ananda*. So naturally a person wants to investigate!

Many of us however do not have one unit of human-*ananda*; some fall short in age, some in health, some in control of their passions and desires, some in powers, some in wealth, and still others in relation to loved ones. May be, a child has died, the wife is sick, etc. If symmetry is considered, the most unhappy person may fall short to a level of ten to the minus twenty (10^{-20}) of human *ananda* and the ratio of the happiest to the most unhappy conditions is on the order of 10^{40} .

Following Sri Ramakrishna, we can draw another physical picture: Brahma-

nanda, the joy of the experience of God, can be compared to a large mountain, like the great Himalayas, made of sugar. The happiest of the human beings with one unit of ananda, like Sukadeva of the epics, will get his fill with one small crystal of sugar. Our lot of ananda will be just a molecule of sugar.

Brahmananda is our Birthright

Do we have to follow austerity, practise meditations, observe many rules, rituals and fasting until we elevate ourselves stage by stage to get the Brahmananda? It would appear an impossible task and Brahmananda, then, would appear like a wishful dream. Vedas say, do not worry; the whole of the Brahmananda is yours just for the willing. It belongs to you when you are no more stricken by desires. We have put a thick wrap of cloth over our eyes, and shackles on our feet, and are crying ourselves hoarse that there is no light and we are helpless. It takes only a moment to free ourselves and have all the light and freedom we desire. This is the only mystery in the whole of the model we are trying to develop: Why do we not do it?

Sport and Drama

Brahman is complete in Himself; time, space and causation losing all meaning when referred to It. We on the other hand are anxious all the time: 'What is going to happen?' The mystery lies in the fact that the things are happening in nature. We identify a blob of that 'happenings' as our individual selves, as jivas, generate actions, and then go through cycles of births and deaths.

We shall examine a few questions posed here, and these are: 1. Who are we? 2. What is happening in nature? and, 3. Why is it happening?

The Veda says, 'All indeed is this Brahman', 'Thou are That, Svetaketu', 'I am Brahman', and give similar instructions in various other contexts. In our model Brahman Himself enters the bodies of jivas in order to

enjoy His creation. We, therefore, are Brahman Himself.

Nature is all the time changing, giant stars are being born or disintegrating, people are becoming happy or unhappy; it is raining at some place or sunshining at another place. We have seen that there is one law called Conservation of Energy to which there is no known exception in nature and that according to this law if we add all the changes taking place in nature over a time, and add them together, the net change will be nothing.

'What is happening in nature?' has therefore two answers, one from the standpoint of the absolute, and the answer here is that nothing is really happening. The other is from the standpoint of the phenomenal world, and the answer is that many events are taking place, though they add up to nothing. If we accept the first answer, the next question, 'why is there a nature?', does not arise, as it does not exist. We are asking this question because we do not have any perception of the Primal Energy behind the phenomenal nature; to us the world exists and is the only hard fact.

Brahman wills and we have the space, the heavenly bodies, the earth, the life and the world with all the charms and varieties. When Brahman wills he is called God, or Brahman with attributes. Brahman wills not because he needs something but it is only a spontaneous expression of his creativity, like a sport. His creative power is the Primal Energy, Mahamaya, or Nature.

Jiva is Brahman in essence, but there is a basic difference between the Jiva and God. Jiva is trapped in Mahamaya, whereas God has Mahamaya under his control. Once Jiva gets entrapped in the whirlpool of the nature, most interesting things start happening: the Jiva forgets his identity with Brahman, he projects his self on the whirlpool and creates his world moving in nature by actions and interactions of forces at various levels of existence, as we discussed earlier.

If one could look at a social event involving a number of people, with absolute dispassion and detachment as Sri Ramakrishna would once in a while do, one could probably see the same divine spirit working through many castings of human bodies and enacting a drama for fun.

The game goes on and on and it is a part of the game that we are always in some secret communication with the God without our knowing it. Men like adventure, face danger and hardship, and can do it because they know that they are invincible. It is also a part of the game that God reveals to the seers the secrets of the Vedas, the spirits, the sacrifices, prayers, meditation and samadhi. The great teachers keep the traditions of this knowledge and in every age, wise people open out new vistas and knowledge and enrich our faith, keeping up the spirit of the game. There cannot be anything more marvellous than the fact that a man can reach the height of knowledge when he becomes one with God even in this body of inert material. They live simple lives but exert powerful influences on the society for ages.

Avatar

Hinduism has its roots hidden in the immemorable past and we do not know when and where it started. There are other religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, which were established in historical time based on the teachings of enlightened persons. The founders of these religions are the messengers of God and we worship them almost like God. In our model, God incarnates in the body of a human, lives the human life, suffers the constraints of the body under the laws of nature. He suffers the inequities of social injustice and enjoys the most intimate relationship with men, as the fulfilment of His will for the creation.

Life is so rich with experience, we consider it most logical, that God the sportsman and God the actor, will not pass the opportunity of enjoying it by direct participation.

The divinity incarnates incognito in the most obscure situation, among simple people whose hearts have not been hardened by the arrogance of learning or high birth or riches and who can perceive the truth in its simplicity. He participates in all the activities of their life, tending the cattle, tilling the soil, going to school with the children of the same age, playing their sports, making merry and love with the people of all ages and sexes, fighting their war and suffering in sickness and disease common to the people.

All the time, whether he is working, playing, enjoying, or suffering, he remains his self-same Being and radiates happiness. All the people, and even nature, by his magic presence are automatically raised to a higher level of consciousness and knowledge. In his simple life, among his simple-hearted friends and relations, the secrets of the creation and of all the philosophies and religions are made alive. The Incarnation is like an open window of a house closed from all around through which you can reach into the infinite sky. Our world is the closed room and we can easily see God through his Son, the window.

A liberated person is free from the bondage of the world, but he does not have the power and the purpose of an Incarnation. God, incarnate as the Avatar, has all the power in the world under his control. He is only acting when he enjoys the mother's love as a helpless child, or suffers death on the cross to atone for the sins of the entire humanity. He comes down to earth among us along with his associates, lives a short span of life and then goes back to his eternal Abode, unnoticed by most of the world. But the work he has done is very potent and acts like the tiny seed of a banyan tree, which sprouts, then sends its branches and roots in all directions and for thousands of years gives shade and fruits to many lives.

The lives and teachings of the prophets are the greatest boon to the humanity from

God, and the human life is blessed by their birth among us. There is a very interesting aspect about them: the common people understand and accept them, whereas the learned people and the nobility find it hard to accept the divine Presence in an ordinary mortal human body.

Hail the New Light

Natural states move from order to disorder and the forces of inertia would like that to continue. God promised that He will come down to earth in every epoch to reestablish the order. We are ever ready to welcome the new order at the break of a new epoch. We do not know what new sport will be played and what new drama will be staged, and wait with keen anticipation every morning to see unveiled a new world.

3. THE PLUNDER

Children of the Immortality

We have made a quick tour through an easy terrain across the vast expanse of Vedanta and picked up some values of our choice as we went along. We now take a stock of our gains to guide us in life in the world.

The keynote of our model is 'There is no death and there is nothing to fear.' This world is a stage for acting and enjoying, full of fun and mirth. There is no escape because there is no place to escape, and every moment we live we have to work; enjoying it or resenting it, depends on our temperament. The only difference it makes living through Vedanta is that work done with knowledge is more effective. We work without any fear and we take complete responsibility for all that we do.

We work under the compulsion of the natural forces. We however have the free will to direct this 'natural power' to achieve our ends. A man is what he wills and the work he performs reflects his personality. Work motivated by the base instincts and ignorance leads to misery and destruction.

Work motivated by egotism leads to entanglement, conflict, pleasure and pain. Unmotivated and detached work carried out with the spirit of duty and service does good to not only the doers, but also to the community at large. Such work lies at the base of all noble institutions and performances. We do all kinds of work under various circumstances, but it should be our aim to do work which is beneficial to all and does not even unintentionally, bring harm to anybody. Further, the work should lead us to the door to freedom from the forces of nature.

The Being and the Ideal

We hardly understand anything about how the world works, but we feel always vaguely dissatisfied. We wish that the affairs of the world could be arranged better. The wheels of the world move so powerfully, it is so certain, and it is so heartlessly inconsiderate, that we feel crushed. This is because we cannot see the being and can see only a part of the happenings at a time. In our mind we create an ideal and get frustrated that we can never achieve it. Thus we have three options to strive for:

1. Establish a heaven on earth. This ideal, as we know, is a mirage and all attempts in that direction end up in failure.
2. Work for a heaven after death. Our model does not give importance to this concept.
3. Love the world, with all its shortcomings and limitations, and create a spirit of unity by service and devotion. This is our approach.

Sustainable Lifestyle

The earth is our common heritage and our fate is linked up with the fate of others through the well-being of the earth. Our lifestyle, science, commerce, etc. shall be sustainable with the resources available on the earth, not only for us but also for the generations to come. We must protect the environ-

ment on the earth, use only the renewable and regenerable resources, and have due considerations for the needs of other people on an equitable basis. We value the diversity of life and try to preserve it. By the same token, we should value the cultural diversity and preserve it as an asset instead of trying to impose any one culture on all the people. Life by nature has competition, struggle and evolution. We can direct these natural forces by cooperation and harmony for the common goal of the betterment of conditions on earth for all forms of life, including humanity.

Altruism and Ananda

Science and economics do not recognize altruism in their calculations, but selfless services and sacrifices lie at the very base of our human civilization. Men sacrifice because men have the abode of God at their heart and their love for God extends to cover the creations of God as well. When considered from this spirit there indeed is no altruism, as our concern for others comes out of extension of our selves to transcend all barriers, whereby we create a relationship with others. This spirit is there in every person and we should cultivate it and not suppress it.

If ananda were not here, who would live? and who would breathe? We live, we work, we struggle and we enjoy because ananda fills every corner of the world. We love the world, because this is only an expression of God's creativity: His sport and drama. Our desire limits our access to ananda and when our actions are not driven by the desires, our access to the infinite ocean of ananda gets free and unobstructed.

Our great teachers and the prophets work and live among us, but with a difference. Almost like God, they remain free from the grips of nature. Their body and mind may suffer extreme pain, but they radiate happiness and good will. Even on the earth they are always united with Brahman and their life and work are for the service of the earth and not for satisfying any desire.

The End

We have been telling the story of a layman who is exploring the charming concepts of Vedanta: partly visible and mostly too subtle for his grasp. The end, however is very clearly spelt out and repeated so that there is no mistake, and it reads: 'No return, say the Vedas'. That is the end for all, the soul is united with the eternal Being, where there is spring and festivity all the time, never to return.

Bibliography

1. Swami Bhuteshananda, *Ramakrishna Kathamrita Prasanga* (Bengali).
2. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*.
3. Swami Saradananda, *Ramakrishna Lila Prasanga* (Bengali).
4. Swami Vishwarupananda, *Vedanta Darshana* (Bengali).
5. Mahendranath Gupta ('M.'), *Ramakrishna Kathamrita* (Bengali).
6. *Major Upanishads* (Published by Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta).
7. Richard Feynman, Robert B. Leighton, Mathew Sands, *The Feynman Lectures on Physics*.

O Indra, mortal indeed is this body, held by death. But it is the support of this deathless, bodiless Atman. Verily, the embodied self is held by pleasure and pain. Surely there is no cessation of pleasure and pain for one who is embodied. But pleasure and pain do not touch one who is bodiless.

—Chandogya Upanishad, 8.12.1

Letters to the Editor

Respected Swami,

...this is to convey my deep thanks to the learned author for the write-up appearing in the '96 August issue of the *PB* on pages 483-9, on the life of Sri Guru Gobind Singhji, under the caption 'Guru Gobind Singh: a Saint-Soldier'. The learned author has undoubtedly taken great pains to collect the enlightening material.

But I disagree with her in respect of the following few points:

(1) In the third paragraph on page 483, it has been stated that, 'the father explained to Sri Gobind Rai, as he was called then, that those helpless people had come from Kashmir and had no one to protect them.' I have not read these adjectives as marked above in any book which I have come across. I am sure a saint or Guru of his stature could not have used such words which tend to indicate ego, which the Guruji could not and did not at all have.

(2) She has quoted Dr. Gopal Singh on page 484: 'He had to fight both the Hindus and the Muslims', which apparently has been cut off from the context and tends to convey that he had to fight against the whole Hindu community, which is far from fact as he and, for that matter, all the previous nine Gurus were saviours of Hindus and their religion, of which they considered themselves a part. In fact, in those days there were no such differences as felt now, which have grown in later years on account of politics or which were cunningly created by the British and their paid agents to divide and rule. It is a fact that he had to fight the mountain chiefs, who happened to be Hindus, and who were acting on the directives of the Moghuls or out of self-interest. In this connection, the learned author may kindly see the biography of the Guruji, 'Yug Purush', by S. Ranbir Singh, the Editor of *Milap*—a renowned all-India daily.

I think the quotation should not have been given in such a sweeping manner, which, perhaps, unknowingly creates a bitter feeling, which certainly is not the author's intention, as she too, in the same sentence, has stated 'the Hindus also fought alongside him'.

(3) On page 485, she states that 'five sikhs offered their lives'. In fact, they were (1) Shri

Daya Ram of Lahore, (2) Shri Dharam Das of Delhi, (3) Muhakam Chand of Dwarka, (4) Sri Saheb Chand of Bidar, and (5) Sri Himmat Rai of Sri Jagannath Puri. They were Hindu shishyas (disciples) of the Guru.

I would venture to state that the Sikh religion is also following 'Bramha' as 'Akal Purakh', as the Hindus in essence do. In this regard a reference is invited to *Dasham Guru Granth Sahib* in general, and to the chapters under 'Chowbees Avtar' in the same *granth*, in particular. There Guru Maharaj has given details about Bhagwati Chandi, Bramha, Vishnu, Shiv, Machh, Kachh, Varah, Vaman, Parshuram, Ram, Krishna, and others. In fact, Guru Maharaj has with some pride mentioned that he belongs to the line of Sri Rama and his progeny Sri Kush. Various *Banis* in *Guru Granth Sahib* will make it clear that the Gurus never considered themselves separate from the Hindus. I quote only a few:

Achait Par Bramha Parmeshwar

Antaryamin

Madhusudhan, Damodhar Swami

Rishikesh Govardhan Dhari

Mohan Madho Krishen Murari

Jagadheshwar Hari Jiva, Asur Sangheray

Jag Jiwan Unyasi Thakur

Ghar Ghar Dasi Hai Sangha

Vanmala Vibhoshan Kamal nain

Sundar Kundal Mukat Bain,

Shankh Chakra, Gadha hai Dhari

Mahasarathi Sat Sauga.

—(Mohalla V, p. 1080)

There are numerous other *Banis* in which besides Bhawani he has mentioned all the other Avtars or Gods—in his Shabads such as—

Prabhuji too kah Laj Hamari

Neelkanth, Nar Hari, Narayan

Neel Basan Banwari

Param Purkh Parmeshwar Swami

Pawan Pawanahari

Madhav Mahajyoti Madhu Mardhan

Man Makund Murari.

I wonder whether the points raised could be examined and suitable amendments issued by the learned author herself.

With great regards to your holy self and to

the learned author,

Yours at the feet of Sri Paramahansa
Ramakrishna Deb,

O. N. Thassu
Madhya Pradesh

* * *

Revered Swamiji,

Pranams.... I am thankful to Mr. Thassu for his keen interest in my article on 'Guru Gobind Singh: A Saint Soldier' and his observations as well. As desired by him, I am enclosing herewith my replies with a request that one should go into the matter with the feelings which I am trying to convey and not go after the literal meaning of the words. Religion/God is a matter of faith and not for discussion....

With profound regards,

Yours affectionately,
Jasbir Kaur Aluja
Patiala

1: Regarding: ...a deputation of Pandits...Sri Sis Ganj Sahib now stands.' (*Prabuddha Bharata*, 1996, p. 483).

'The sacrifice roused the devitalized Hindus from their supine somnolence and gave them a hint of power that comes from self-respect and sacrifice. Guru Tegh Bahadur thus earned the enduring sobriquet title of *Hind-di-chadar* or the shield of India.' (Dr. Taran Singh, *Guru Granth Ratnavali*, publ. Punjabi University, Patiala, p. 71)

It is a fact of history that the Kashmiri Pandits had come all the way walking from Kashmir to Anandpur Sahib to seek the help of the ninth Guru as at that time they could not find anyone else who could help and protect them when Emperor Aurangzeb broke the temples, insulted the *Janeu* (*Yajnopaveet*) and *choti* (a tuft of hair on the head). Even recently, on 14 September 1993, over a hundred Kashmiri Pandits marched in procession from the Red Fort to the Gurudwara Sis Ganj Sahib in Delhi (where Guru Tegh Bahadur had courted martyrdom defending the cause of the oppressed Kashmiri Pandits and the freedom of faith).

The reply of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji was only by way of explaining the mission of the Kashmiri Pandits to his son who was just nine years old at

that time and it does not indicate that the Guru had ego. His great sacrifice itself proves that he was without ego. He was just thinking to himself when the reason for the advent of the Kashmiri Pandits was communicated by him to his son Gobind Rai. The suggestion of the child was accepted by the ninth Guru and he sacrificed his life to protect the religion of the Hindus.

An extract from Martyrdom that Revitalized Dharma, Amar Singh IAS (Retd.), The Sikh Review, December 1996, pp. 13-16.

'The Sikhs have always been inspired by a sense of Divine Mission and so no fear of any earthly power deflected them from their duty. History is replete with their sacrifices and acts of bravery. All the *ten Gurus of the Sikhs* lived for the service of mankind and as such were fearless, selfless and united. In all of them the voice of God spoke without any variation.

'The Hindu social system bred various divisions; discord and mutual jealousy had further so weakened it that it became impossible to withstand the foreign onslaught. To lift the society from this morass of oppression the lives of the Ten Gurus of the Sikhs are relevant and an important landmark in history.

'In this galaxy of prophets, Guru Nanak was in vanguard and founded Sikhism. The ten Gurus tried to create, out of the existing disunited and emasculated society, *a well-knit homogeneous body of people who could devote, with a bold and selfless spirit, their service to the growth of their countrymen in the right direction.* It was Guru Tegh Bahadur who stood against the tyranny, bigotry and oppression, let loose fiendishly on the society of the day,... The purpose of his life was to carry out God's will and sacrifice oneself to fulfil the Lord's will. He enjoined that one must be truthful, loving and return good for evil. "Serve the Lord and his creatures," he preached and acted on the axiom himself.

'After finishing his Assam tour, Guru Tegh Bahadur turned towards Punjab for his mission and went to stay at Anandpur where he started receiving people three times a day.... Even visitors from Kabul came.... At this moment, Aurangzeb was engaged in converting the population of Kashmir to Islam. In consequence of this, a party of Kashmiri Brahmins came to meet the Guru and appealed to him to help them by giving his protection....

...his handsome young son of nine years,

Govind Rai, who was sitting in the crowd, got up with tiny folded hands, to the bewilderment of all, addressed his father, "O true Lord, who else is more suited to fulfil the condition of a perfect man than yourself as a sacrifice for the atonement of the sins of others?"

'The Guru gave a smile of satisfaction and said, "Blessed be thou. I am now satisfied that, *after me*, you will not only continue the spiritual teachings but by taking up arms in the righteous cause will supplement the *sacrifice* by me." Thereafter, the Guru asked the Brahmins to go to Aurangzeb and tell him if Guru Tegh Bahadur accepted Islam they would follow....'

Such examples can be quoted from *Ramcarit Manas*, the *Gita* and the *Srimad Bhagavatam*:

When Lord Krishna gave the discourse in the battle field to Arjuna in order to remove his doubts, Lord Krishna used the first person singular. This was not motivated by ego. The intention was only to remove the despondency which had come over Arjuna at a critical moment.

Similarly, in *Srimad Bhagavatam*, Uddhava addressing Sri Krishna asks: 'O Thou of wondrous powers, tell me where Thou art most manifest. Where is Thy power greatly present amongst beings and things both in the heaven and on the earth, in the nether region and in all the other quarters as well?' Sri Krishna replies: 'O Uddhava, this same question was asked by Arjuna on the eve of the battle of Kurukshetra (*Gita* ch. X). I will tell thee in brief My divine manifestations. I am the self in all beings, their friend and benefactor. I am the God of all. I am the supreme Cause of their life and death. I am the All....' [Swami Prabhavananda, *Srimad Bhagavatam*, (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1972), pp. 246-50; See p. 247]

2: Regarding 'He had to fight both...to Thee.' (*Prabuddha Bharata*, 1996, pp. 484-85).

Prior to the above statement, I had also stated on p. 484 that: 'He was destined to fight the Rajput vassals of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in the Shivalik Hills, and later, the forces of Aurangzeb himself. Though victorious in most of these encounters, the Guru did not build an empire or acquire an inch of anyone's land, for he believed that, in a battle, success is achieved only when no one is defeated!'

To clarify further, I add a few words more from Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji's Introduction to *Thus Spake the Tenth Master*, p. xxxii, para 1:

'Guru Gobind Singh had set himself against oppression and intolerance.... Among his admirers and followers were Hindus as well as Muslims. Many staunch followers of Islam had aligned themselves with him against the imperial armies. Pir Budhu Shah sacrificed four of his sons and a number of his disciples in the battle of Bhangani fighting on his side. The Muslim ruler of Malerkotla Nawab Sher Muhammad Khan raised a strong protest against the execution of Guru Gobind Singh's two minor sons at Sirhind. Thus people of different faiths were attracted to the Guru whose teaching was that all men were equal and that, though the outer forms differed, the fundamental truth was the same everywhere.'

A reference to Shri Ranbir Singh, the then Editor of *Milap*, has been made. I have no difference of opinion with Shri Ranbir Ji. It is said, '*Ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti*, Truth is just a single entity but the learned have presented it in many forms.' And its vitality presents it in diverse forms and makes it look fresh. Its splendour thrills even a casual onlooker. Guru Gobind Singh and his teachings are Universal and Eternal. In every age, people with positive thinking will try to understand the spirit of the Guru's teaching and give it a fresh look.

3. Para 1: Regarding '...When at his call,...out of His pleasure.' (*Prabuddha Bharata*, 1996, p.485)

Of course, Sikh means a Shishya (disciple) in Sanskrit, which further means one who is a disciplined person. And the Sikhs came into existence since the time of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. They were peace-loving devotees. The baptised persons were already 'Sikhs' who had already come in contact with the Guru. That is why, they came into the Assemblage and had the opportunity to offer their heads. 'We all know Guru Nanak as the founder of the Sikh religion.' (*Guru Nanak's Practical Philosophy of Life*, Bhag Singh: Founder Editor, Sikh Review, Calcutta, p. 408; quoted from *Perspectives on Guru Nanak* (Patiala: Panjabi University, 1975).

Further, '...in actual fact it (Sikh) derives its origin from Pali and means the same as in the great Buddha's Dhammapad—the elect, or in the Sikh parlance, chosen (by God) God's own. The nomenclature of "Khalsa" which Guru Gobind Singh gave to the brotherhood of the Sikhs also means the same, being derived from the Persian term then current for King's own (lands). Viewed

thus, the true purpose of founding the Sikh order not merely as a system of religion but also as a distinct, all-embracing, social organism becomes manifest.' (Dr. Gopal Singh, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, International Edition, 1987, p. xxxv.)

And after baptism, they become 'Singhs', i.e. lions. When history took a turn, it was the need of the times when from the time of the sixth Guru onwards, they were converted from 'peace-loving devotees' to 'martial devotees'; but, always defensive and never offensive. Guru Gobind Singh in his *Zafarnama* i.e. a letter of victory written to the then Emperor Aurangazeb says, 'When all the remedies fail, it is fair to take the sword in hand' ('Zafarnama', *The Sikh Review*, Sept. 1996, stanza 22, p. 28, rendered into English by Jasbir Kaur Ahuja).

Swami Vivekananda has recorded this fact about the Sikhs in his writing on the 'Historical Evolution of India' (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 1956, vol. 6, p. 166). 'One great prophet, however, arose in the north, Govind Singh, the last Guru of the Sikhs, with creative genius; and the result of his spiritual work was followed by the well-known political organisation of the Sikhs.' Again at pp. 513-15 in the same volume, there occurs a narration of an event at Balaram Babu's residence at Calcutta:

'While walking to and fro, Swamiji took up the story of Guru Govind Singh and with his great eloquence touched upon the various points in his life—how the revival of the Sikh sect was brought about by his great renunciation, austerities, fortitude, and life-consecrating labours—how by his initiation he re-Hinduised Mohammedan converts and took them back into the Sikh community.... Speaking of the great power that used to be infused in those days into the initiates of Guru Govind, Swamiji recited a popular Doha (couplet) of the Sikhs: "*Savā lākh se ek ladāūn; tabe gobind sīnha nām kahāūn*". The meaning is: "When Guru Govind gives the Name, i.e. the initiation, a single man becomes strong enough to triumph over a lakh and a quarter of his foes."

'...Men can never be united unless there is a bond of common interest.... Guru Govind made it understood everywhere that the men of his age, be they Hindus or Mussulmans, were living under a regime of profound injustice and oppression. He did not create any common interest, he only pointed it out to the masses. And so

both Hindus and Mussulmans followed him.... Yet, in Indian history such an example is very rare indeed.'

3. Para 2 onwards:

I would venture to say that these observations are irrelevant to the theme because it is an article on *Guru Gobind Singh: A Saint Soldier* and not the history of *Dasam Granth* or *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. But since the observation has been made, I reply as follows:

It is true that 'Akal Purakh' is *Brahma* (God the absolute), but not *Bramha* (demiurge)—as written by Mr. Thassu. All the 'chowbees Avatars' mentioned in the *Dasam Granth* are the adjectival names of the Almighty God who is the 'Akal Purakh'.

Besides, I have quoted Mr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, President, Sahitya Academy, at p. 487: '...His (Guru Gobind Singh Ji's) was the soul of a poet which appreciated the great myths of the Hindu Puranas and as a soldier of God who had dedicated himself to a God who is forever fighting the forces of Evil, he understood the value of the Good and was a relentless fighter in the Army of the Good against the Evil.... He had a deep knowledge of the lore and literature of the Sikh Order,....'

No doubt, all the Gurus were proud of their progeny, but still they maintained their distinction of being Sikhs. The Sikhs in general fought against the evil forces prevalent in the social, political and religious systems of the day. It is only for this purpose that the Sikh Order was founded and the Sikhs were organized.

The ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji said, he neither terrifies any one, nor is he terrified. He thus put up a bold resistance to the evil plans of the Emperor Aurangazeb, sacrificed his life but did not accept Islam. These epics were written by Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji to inspire the suppressed people.

One more supporting view regarding the different names of god used in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is reproduced below from *A Critical Study of Adi Granth* by S.S. Kohli, 1961, pp. 336-9.

'...Adi Granth establishes the unity of God, who is perfect and a treasure-house of qualities (*Puran, Sanipuran*), who is faultless and flawless, who is light, who is good and holy, who is beautiful, who is almighty, who is omnipresent, who is omniscient, who is primal cause and the es-

(Continued on page 376)

Synopsis of the Question-Answer Session

HELD DURING THE TEACHERS' SEMINAR AT MAYAVATI ON 24 SEPTEMBER 1995

SWAMI NIKHILESWARANANDA

Q. 1. What type of follow-up work do you suggest so that the enthusiasm generated amongst the students after your lecture in our educational institution is maintained?

A. 1. Environment plays a vital role in maintaining the students' proper spirit and attitude. Many of the school buildings I visited were in bad shape and the atmosphere was not congenial to clarity of mind and thought. In order that the attitude of 'Work is Worship' is cultivated during the study hours by both the teachers and the students, it is imperative that the classrooms and the campus become places of worship and are neat and clean. Cleanliness is next to Godliness. I know, you will say we do not have enough funds for maintaining buildings, for purchasing proper furniture, for white-washing of the walls, etc. but something can be done even under these limitations. You can set apart one period per week for cleaning the campus and you may even contribute some money for improving the building. You can have a competition of writing artistic posters amongst the students. This will inspire students to read good quotations of great men and women and later on these posters containing good quotations can be hung on the walls. This will surely brighten up the place.

Have a big picture of Swami Vivekananda in the prayer hall, or, if there is no prayer hall, then in the main campus, in such a place that all the students can have a look at it and derive inspiration, because Swami

Vivekananda is the ideal of the youth.

Daily meditation and prayer in the school is a must. But very few schools have programmes of meditation. Some schools do have prayer sessions but they are not carried out systematically and properly, with the result they become monotonous and ineffective. If a good music teacher is not available, help can be taken of audio-cassettes. You may have different prayers on different days in a week to avoid monotony. These have been experimented in some of the schools with great success. Previously students were not regular in prayer and attended prayer sessions reluctantly. But this experiment of playing audio-cassettes of different beautiful prayers on different days brought very good results and the students became regular in prayer. Furthermore, students who attend schools where prayers are held nicely and regularly get brighter academic results because of improvement in their concentration of the mind.

You can have a youth study circle which meets preferably once a week, wherein interested students may read some inspiring books of Swami Vivekananda and hold discussion on whatever has been read. The students also may be motivated to speak something by turn every week. In the beginning only a few interested students may come forward, but presently others will also join. This is what we have observed in some of the schools.

Please motivate the students to read good books, particularly biographies of great men and women of the world and those dealing with self-development. If necessary, keep extra copies of such books in your library for wider circulation.

Q. 2. Nowadays students are not showing proper respect towards the teachers. Under these circumstances how can we handle the students?

A. 2. The teachers should not demand respect but command respect. I know a few teachers who command great respect from their students. Whenever students see honesty, truthfulness, sincerity, dedication, etc. in their teachers, they have great reverence for them, and the influence of such teachers on them is much more than even the influence of their parents. If you ask your student to bring *pan* and tobacco for you, naturally, you cannot command respect from them! The character of the teachers has a silent transforming effect on the characters of the students, so it is very essential that the teachers themselves practise virtues like honesty, truthfulness, sincerity, dedication, and other qualities.

Q. 3. In the present condition of society where corruption is the dominant feature even in Government departments, how can we practise honesty and other virtues?

A. 3. I agree that it is indeed very difficult to practise truthfulness and honesty in the present state of affairs and those who try to practise these virtues are called 'impractical'! But we know many teachers who *are* practising these virtues in spite of so many difficulties. I will cite a few examples.

i) One fine morning a lady teacher came to a monk of our Order and started weeping. On being asked why, she said the principal of her school had told her to give statements about the school, in the manner which the Principal wanted, to the Inspector who was to visit the school in a couple of

days. Her conscience was bothering her because to speak in the manner in which the Principal wanted meant speaking lies and compromising with truth. On the other hand, the Principal had warned her that if she did not follow his instructions she would lose her job. She was in a great dilemma. She was not able to decide whether to speak the truth and lose her job or to speak a lie and compromise with truth. The monk told her, 'You yourself will have to take a decision in this regard. *'Satyam eva jayate, Truth alone triumphs'*—this is an eternal principle. But the person who wants to follow the truth has to sacrifice, has to pay the price in terms of sufferings. By following the truth we shall enjoy the shelter of truth but we have to be prepared to undergo sufferings.'

After receiving this advice, the teacher went back to her home and finally made up her mind resolving that she would not compromise truth at any cost even if it meant losing her job and facing poverty. As soon as she made this resolve, she was filled with tremendous strength from within. Next morning she went to the Principal's chamber and with firmness said, 'I am going to speak the truth whatever may be the consequences, Do whatever you like, but I am not going to speak lies to the Inspector when he comes to the school.' The Principal became unnerved by seeing this timid teacher in a new form and with folded hands requested her not to do so because he knew, this meant losing his own job before the job of the teacher was lost. The lady teacher did not agree. Finally the Principal begged her to remain absent on the day when the Inspector was to come to the school. The lady teacher agreed to this proposal as she wanted to avoid a fight. When she reported this to the monk, he congratulated her and advised her to cultivate more inner strength through *japam*, prayer and meditation and take the help of other good teachers in fighting for justice collectively in future.

ii) A teacher in Bihar was once attacked by a few students. They came to his house at night with weapons and told him to manipulate the examination papers in the manner they wanted or face dire consequences. They left him after giving him this warning. The teacher who always wanted to stick to the truth and honesty was in a great

dilemma. He thought over the matter and finally decided to face dire consequences rather than compromise with truth, even if it meant losing his own life. The teacher is still living! Curiously, the examination papers of those mischievous students somehow did not come to him at all for checking!
(concluded)

Vivekananda's Miltonic Poem: 'Angels Unawares'

(Continued from page 347)

ings from predecessors, not excluding Shakespeare. James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1921) is an elaborate imitation of a Homeric tradition.

In theme too, 'Angels Unawares' is 'Miltonic', as we have seen, because it treats of man's eviction from some sort of a 'garden of Eden' (the primeval forest) and his recovery of it through misery in historic times. Milton deals with sulphurous lakes, skyey regions, chaos, light and shade.

'Angels Unawares' talks of earth and earth alone; its author was prevented from

soaring by his Guru. The success of a poem depends on the organization of material. Pervaded by the spirit of Jīva-Śiva, man can turn his habitat into 'heaven'. This (I believe) is the signification of the fable in our poem. It seems to rest on three pillars—in each movement there is a sequence of events connected by the relation of cause and effect, one of a triangular movement. Time is metaphorically apprehended; the episodes firmly subordinate to a lesson in good morality (e.g. *Everyman*). This is how the poem has given me (a very ordinary reader) much aesthetic pleasure. That is enough, or should be enough. □

Facets of Ego

(Continued from page 352)

the individual ego comes closer to universal ego, one acquires inner joy, strength, peace, and tranquillity, and this will relieve one of external dependence. When this state is reached, the ego is said to be fully mature. So, full maturity of the ego can be attained

successively, first by being established in oneself, then transcending the ego boundary and becoming one with humanity, and finally uniting the individual ego with the universal ego. □

News & Reports

THE 87TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

Synopsis of the Governing Body's Report for 1995-96

The 87th Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at Belur Math on Sunday the 22nd December, 1996 at 3.30 p.m. Revered Swami Gahanananda, Vice President of the Ramakrishna Mission was the chairman of the proceedings. Revered President Maharaj was present for a short time and gave a brief benedictory address. A synopsis of the report of the Governing Body for 1995-96, placed before the members is given below. The report has stated the statistical data about the Ramakrishna Mission activities. By way of additional information it has given a brief outline of the activities of the Ramakrishna Math also.

Motto

The Motto behind the activities of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission is '*Ātmano Mokṣārtam Jagaddhitāya ca*' i.e. 'for one's own liberation and for the welfare of the world'. This is the essence of the *Sanātana Dharma* (Eternal Religion) viewed in the light of the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. To give a practical shape to this idea, Swami Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

The year under review happened to be the Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's visit to the Thousand Island Park, where he delivered his *Inspired Talks*. The event was celebrated in a grand manner by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York. The programme included a town meeting, a pilgrimage to the Vivekananda Rock where

Swamiji had meditated, a procession of 32 decorated boats on the St. Lawrence River with a large picture of Swamiji in the lead boat, an interfaith service, concerts by the US Army Band and others, etc. A large number of devotees and friends participated in the celebration.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

During the year, foundation stones were laid for an educational and cultural complex at Port Blair, a higher secondary school building under Chennai (Madras) Mission Ashrama, and a new archives and museum building at Belur Math. Two auditoriums were inaugurated one each at Saradapitha (Belur) and Coimbatore Vidyalyaya. A new building to house a creche and a tailoring school for scheduled caste girls was declared open at Kalady.

A plaque in honour of Swami Vivekananda was unveiled in the Fullerton Auditorium of the Art Institute of Chicago, where Swamiji delivered his epoch-making Chicago Addresses in 1893. A section of the Michigan Avenue, one of the most important streets in Chicago, was named Swami Vivekananda Way.

ACTIVITIES

Relief and Rehabilitation: In the year under report, the *Ramakrishna Mission* undertook extensive relief and rehabilitation programmes involving an expenditure of Rs. 120.57 lakhs. Besides, relief articles worth Rs. 35.15 lakhs were distributed.

The following *primary relief* operations were conducted in different places in which 2,58,517 people were served and 9129 patients were treated:- *Cyclone Relief* in West Bengal, *Distress Relief* in West Bengal and Bihar, *Fire Relief* in Calcutta and in Arunachal Pradesh, *Flood Relief* in West Bengal,

Meghalaya, and Delhi, *Medical Relief* in West Bengal, and *Winter Relief* in West Bengal. Besides, *Flood Relief* was conducted by our Dhaka and Dinajpur centres in Bangladesh.

Under the *Rehabilitation Project*, the construction of the remaining 222 earthquake-resistant houses in the Latur District of Maharashtra started in the previous year was completed. Besides, 2 community halls, 2 school buildings and 6 children's parks were also constructed in the three villages covered under the rehabilitation programme. The villages were inaugurated and the buildings were handed over to the beneficiaries. They were also provided clothes, utensils, provisions and other necessities. A follow-up programme consisting of improved agricultural methods and other rural development activities has been initiated in the above villages.

During the same period the *Ramakrishna Math* conducted *Distress Relief* in Bihar, Gujarat and West Bengal, *Fire Relief* in Orissa, and *Flood* and *Winter Relief* in West Bengal. In all, a sum of Rs. 1.41 lakhs was spent and 45,466 people were served.

Welfare Activity: The *Mission* spent a sum of Rs. 83.83 lakhs by way of providing scholarships and stipends to a large number of students, medical aid to poor patients, and monetary help to aged and destitute men and women. This was in addition to the huge sums spent by our educational institutions for the benefit of poor students and by our hospitals and dispensaries for the treatment of poor patients.

Medical Services: The *Mission*, during the year under review, worked through its 9 hospitals with 1703 beds (61,160 in-patients and 20,61,141 out-patients), 70 out-patient dispensaries (21,11,496 cases) and 22 mobile dispensaries (6,63,798 cases), mostly in rural and tribal areas, spending a sum of about Rs. 12.75 crores.

Under the *Math* centres, there were 5

hospitals with 358 beds serving 14,124 in-patients and 2,19,328 out-patients, 25 dispensaries (6,61,705 out-patients) and 6 mobile dispensaries (1,02,880 cases).

The *Mission* and the *Math* centres conducted several free eye-camps, a cancer detection camp and several dental camps. The *Mission* conducted 2 old age homes, and 4 Nurses' Training Centres (Seva Pratishthan, Vrindaban, Itanagar and Lucknow). The Vivekananda Institute of Medical Sciences of Seva Pratishthan conducted post graduate studies and research in medicine. The *Math* conducted an old age home at Barisha and a Nurses' Training Centre at Tiruvananthapuram.

Educational Work: Through its educational institutions of various types the *Mission* aimed at imparting man-making and character-building education. True to the tradition, the academic results of the *Mission's* educational institutions were also brilliant. In 1995-96 the *Mission* had 5 degree colleges, 4 teachers' training colleges, 5 junior basic training institutes, 12 higher secondary schools, 28 secondary schools, 128 schools of different grades, 4 polytechnics, 7 junior technical and industrial schools, 84 hostels and students' homes, 5 orphanages, 2 institutes of agriculture, 1 school of languages, 1 computer centre, 1 blind boys' academy, 1 librarianship training centre, 4 rural development training institutes, and 2635 non-formal education centres, night schools and the like. The total number of students in all these institutions was 1,59,905 of whom 57,687 were girls. The *Mission* spent a sum of Rs. 38.87 crores for this purpose.

Under the *Math* centres 8661 students were taught in 1 B.Ed. college, 1 Sanskrit college, 1 school of languages and in a total of 29 schools, students' homes and other educational institutions.

Spread of Spiritual and Cultural Ideas:

This was accomplished through a large number of libraries and reading-rooms, lectures and seminars, films of religious and cultural value, regular classes, public celebrations, occasional exhibitions, etc. The publication departments of the *Math* and the *Mission* centres did appreciable work in this regard. The *Math* centres maintained temples, organized lectures, retreats and devotees' meets. Thousands of people were inspired to accept higher values of life by coming into contact with different *Math* and *Mission* centres.

Work in Rural and Tribal Areas: Rural and tribal welfare work has come to occupy a prominent place in the scheme of services rendered by the *Mission*. With its limited funds and workers, the *Mission* has been doing its utmost for serving the poor and backward people as also tribal people in different parts of the country. This is accomplished in three ways:

- (a) through our centres located in rural and tribal areas primarily set up for this purpose;
- (b) through our urban centres, which have taken up development projects in rural and tribal areas, and,
- (c) through our educational and medical institutions in urban areas where rural folk form a significant percentage of the beneficiaries.

The *Mission* spent a sum of about Rs. 5.57 crores specifically for rural and tribal development work, apart from the huge expenditure incurred by the educational and medical institutions located in rural and tribal areas.

The rural development training institutes in Narendrapur, Narainpur, Saradapitha (Belur) as also the Krishi Vigyan Kendra and Divyayan at Ranchi (Morabadi) trained youths for work in rural

and tribal areas in modern methods of agriculture, dairy and poultry farming, etc. The centre in Ranchi (Morabadi) has taken up massive rural development project by way of extension and follow-up of the training programmes of Divyayan. The centre at Narendrapur is conducting numerous integrated rural development projects in several districts of West Bengal. The centres at Cherrapunjee, Shillong, Along, Narottam Nagar, Itanagar and Narainpur have won the love and esteem of the tribal people of the respective areas for their educational and medical work. There was further advancement in the extensive tribal welfare projects undertaken by the Narainpur centre in the Abujmahar area of Bastar District, Madhya Pradesh. The centre in Mumbai continued its comprehensive rural development project at Sakwar with vocational training, medical service and other programmes.

The *Math* centres at Bangalore and Mysore undertook integrated rural development projects. *Math* centres in rural and tribal areas also conducted medical and educational service activities.

Under the *Pallimangal* activities of the Headquarters, a pilot project, initiated in 1980, continued in the villages in and around Kamarpukur and Jayrambati in West Bengal, conducting soil analysis, training for destitute and handicapped women in weaving and rolling of incense stick, training in spinning in mini jute mills, medical services including an eye-camp, and training rural youth as health workers to conduct mass awareness camps as well as to motivate rural people to live a life of health, hygiene and sanitation. During a special drive for polio eradication, 347 children were given polio vaccine. One low-cost house was built and 4 more were taken up for construction.

The statistics relating to these institutions are included under 'Medical Services' and 'Educational Work'.

Foreign Work: The *Mission* centres in Fiji, France, Mauritius, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Switzerland carried on cultural work in addition to spiritual ministration. Some educational work was also conducted by a few of them.

In the *Math* centres in Argentina, Canada, Japan, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Russia, and the United States of America our Swamis gave lectures at the centres and also in colleges, universities, etc. on invitation, conducted religious classes, observed religious festivals with special worship, organized seminars and held retreats. Some of them also brought out useful publications on philosophical subjects and spiritual teachings.

The 8 *Math* and 8 *Mission* centres in Bangladesh were engaged in conducting religious classes, discourses, daily worship and prayer, dispensaries, schools, students' homes, libraries and relief work such as dis-

tribution of food, clothing, etc.

Excluding the Headquarters at Belur Math, the *Mission* and the *Math* had 82 and 78 branches respectively, in India and abroad together.

SOME IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Significant progress has been made in vacating the premises of Swami Vivekananda's ancestral house. To complete the process and renovate the buildings as well as to establish a memorial research-cum-cultural centre, a sum of Rs. 7 to 8 crores will be needed.

The centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission falls on 1st May 1997. A year-long celebration has been planned and a Central Committee has been formed for this purpose at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta, with Swami Lokeshwarananda as Secretary. □

Letters to the Editor

(Continued from page 369)

sence, and above all who is Truth, all-pervasive and everlasting.

'His name is Truth. He must be called Sat or Truth because he is always Truth. All other names except *satnam* are *kirtam* (composed) names. There are several *kirtam* names used in *Adi Granth* because they were more clearly understood by the people of different sects. The Vaishnavas used the following names: Bhagavan, Bishan, Govind, Gopal, Gosain, Hari, Narayana, Murari, Madho, Raghurai, Ram, Krishna, Vasudeva, Parabrahm, Prabhu, Banwari, Banwali, Bawan Rup, Brahm, Gajpati, Narsingh, Kuram, Machh, Kachh, Chatur Bhuj, Kamala-Kant, Lakshmibar, Chakradhar. The Shaivas called god by the name of Shiva, Ishwara, Rudra, Gorakh. The Muslims named Him as Rabb, Allah, Razaq, Khuda. The name to which the Sikh attach special significance is *wahiguru*, which has been used in their verses by the Bards. In the verses of the Gurus, this name does not occur in full. It is split in two parts, *Wahu* and *Guru*.

'According to *Adi Granth* (*Sri Guru Granth Sahib*), God is the only eternal entity, who has

created 'Purushas' and 'Prakriti'.... He is a Purusha distinct from other 'Purushas' (Jivas).... Unlike other Purushas, He is a Purusha, who is from the very beginning (*Adi Purakh*), who is all-pervasive and everlasting (*Sat Purakh*), who is creator (*Karta Purakh*), who is uninfluenced by time (*Akal Purakh*), who is without the influence of maya (*Niranjan Purakh*).'

Sri Guru Granth Sahib starts with the holy hymn of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji and the very first holy word is 'Ek-Onkar'. 'Onkar' is the original word in the text. According to Swami Vivekananda, 'Onkar is the most holy word of the Vedas, a symbolic word meaning the supreme Being, the ocean of Knowledge and Bliss Absolute.' (Raja Yoga)

'...The figure one (Ek) appended (prefixed?) to "Onkar" does not merely signify God's unity as against trinity, but also affirms His being a personality and not merely a Shunya or void....' suggests Kapur Singh (See Gopal Singh, p. 7).

So, *Guru Granth Sahib* is not the monopoly of any one community or sect as it represents the whole humanity and that is why it is universal in its appeal. □

A REPORT ON THE CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S RETURN TO INDIA

After staying in the West for four years Swami Vivekananda returned to India via Sri Lanka in January 1897. To mark the centenary of the memorable event, people of both the countries organized different programmes in which people from all classes took part without reservation. A resumé of the celebrations is given below.

SRI LANKA

Ramakrishna Mission centre in Colombo (Sri Lanka) centre celebrated the Centenary of Swamiji's visit to Sri Lanka on the 15th January. Special worship was performed at Sri Ponnambalavaneshvarar Temple, which was visited by Swamiji on his visit to Colombo. A mammoth procession with the Swamis, representatives of various religious and cultural organizations, devotees, and school children wended its way from the temple to the Vivekananda Society, the venue of the celebration, where Swami Ranganathanandaji, Vice President of the Ramakrishna Order, unveiled the newly installed 9'6" bronze statue of Swamiji and gave a benedictory address. A postal stamp brought out in commemoration of the event was released by Sri Mangala Samaraweera, Minister for Posts and Telecommunication, Government of Sri Lanka, in the presence of the High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka, other dignitaries, and a huge gathering. A cultural programme was organized in the evening.

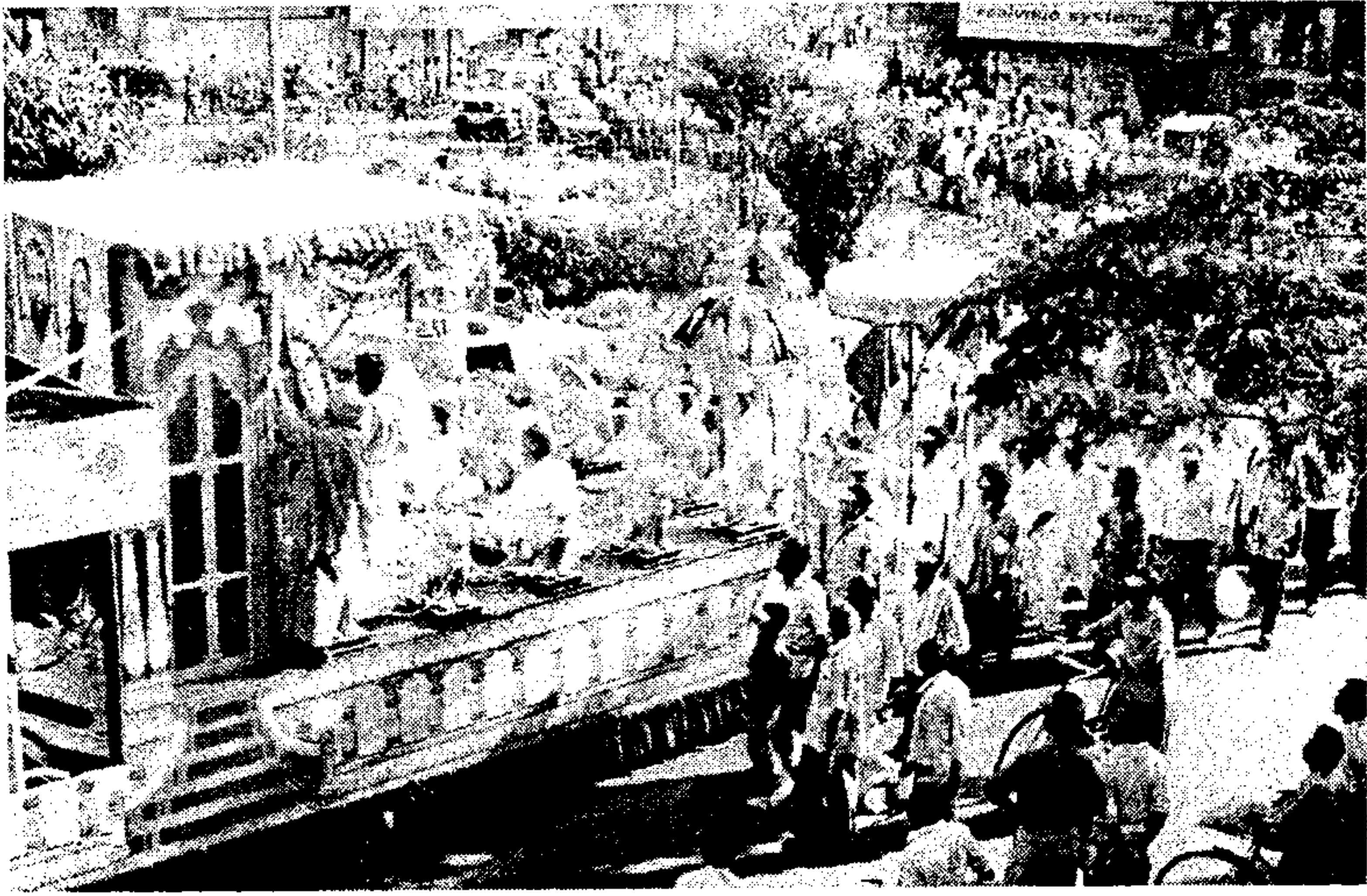
INDIA

Centres of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in Tamil Nadu, led by Ramakrishna Math, Chennai and Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore, in collaboration with private centres and devotee-groups, jointly organized a marathon series of programmes spanning 21 days and



*Unveiling of Swamiji's Statue at Colombo,
Sri Lanka on 15.1.1997 by
Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj*

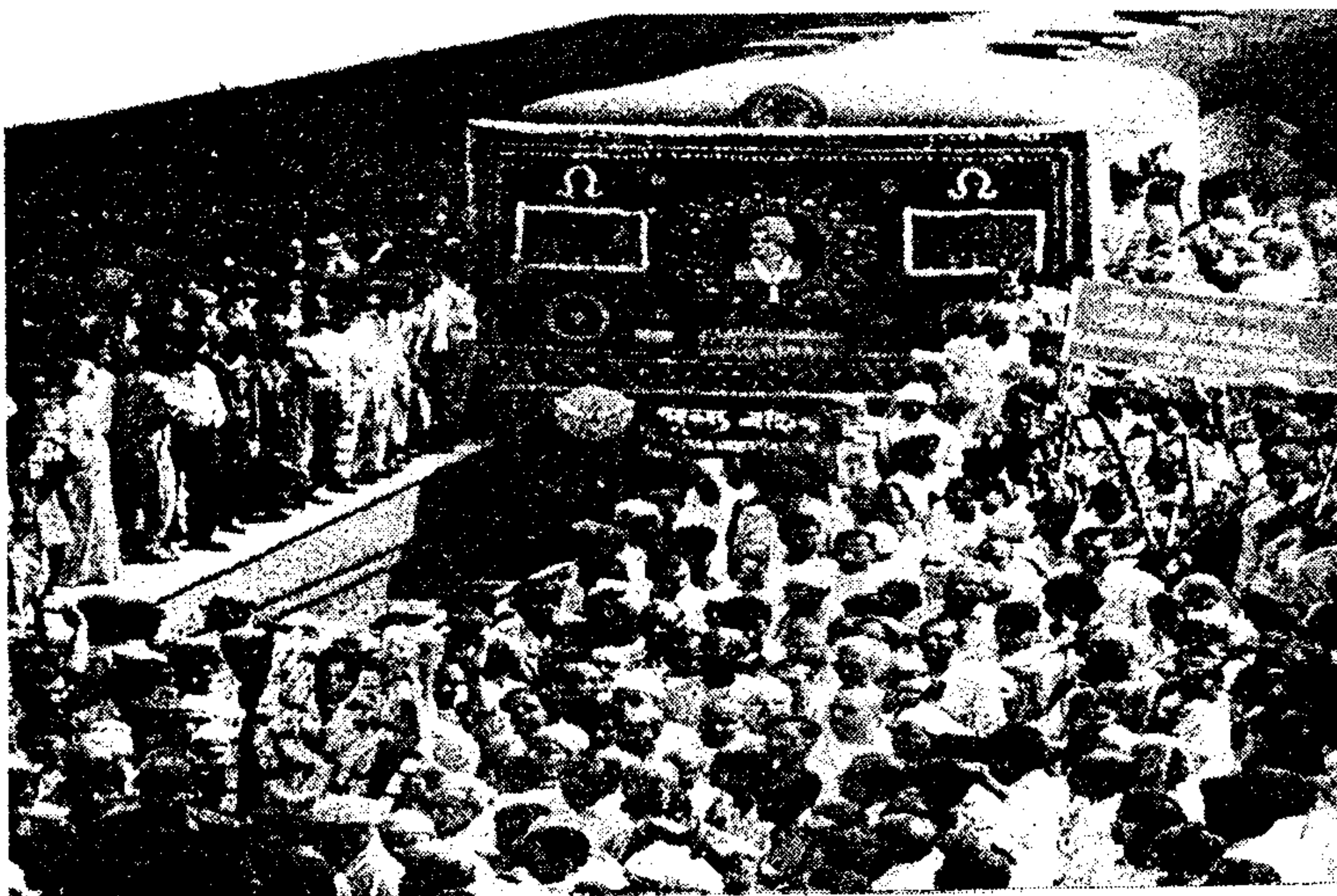
covering a distance of 700 Km. On the 26th January, Swamiji was ceremonially received at the same place Kundakal in Pamban, where he had landed a century ago, and symbolically installed on a colourful, attractive float which had an 8 ft. high image of Swamiji seated on a throne. Accompanying the float were many Swamis and devotee-



A view of procession in Chennai (Madras)

volunteers in cars and vans. The convoy passed through Rameswaram, Ramnad, Paramakudi, Manamadurai, Madurai, Trichy, Thanjavur, Kumbakonam, Panruti, Chengalpattu, and reached Chennai on the 6th February. At every place Swamiji was given a traditional welcome with Nadaswaram, camphor-arati, and offerings of flowers and fruits. There were also processions, public meetings, and cultural programmes. The convoy was, moreover,

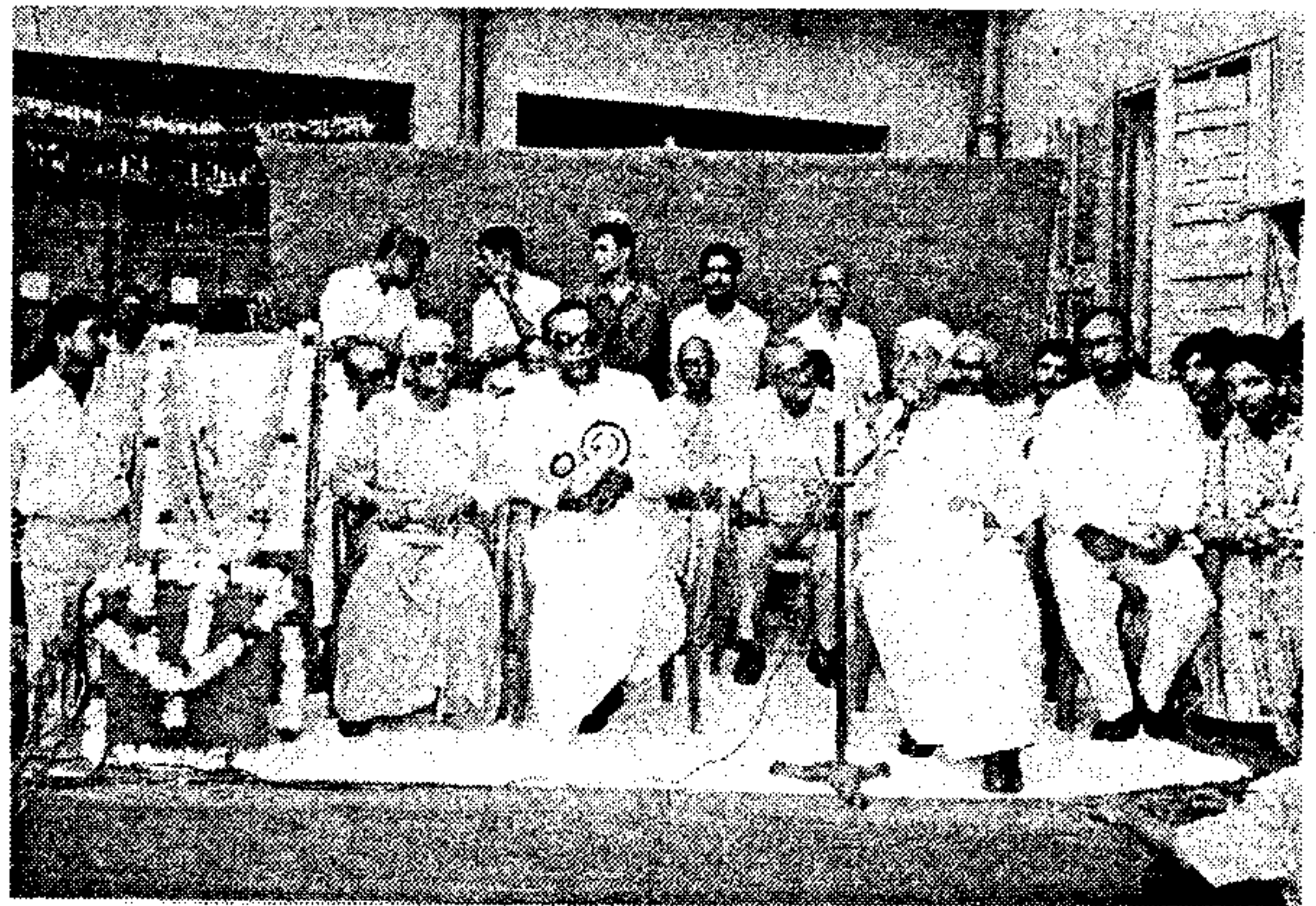
stopped many times on the way at a number of villages and towns for gralanding and arati. The response everywhere was overwhelming and spontaneous. On the 6th February, Swamiji was given a very emotional and devoted reception at Chennai Egmore railway station and this was followed by a long procession of nearly 12,000 students and devotees. The following 9 days there were public meetings, cultural programmes, visits to slums, and group-discussions organized in



*Arrival of the
'Swami Viveka-
nanda Special' train
at Sealdah, Calcutta*

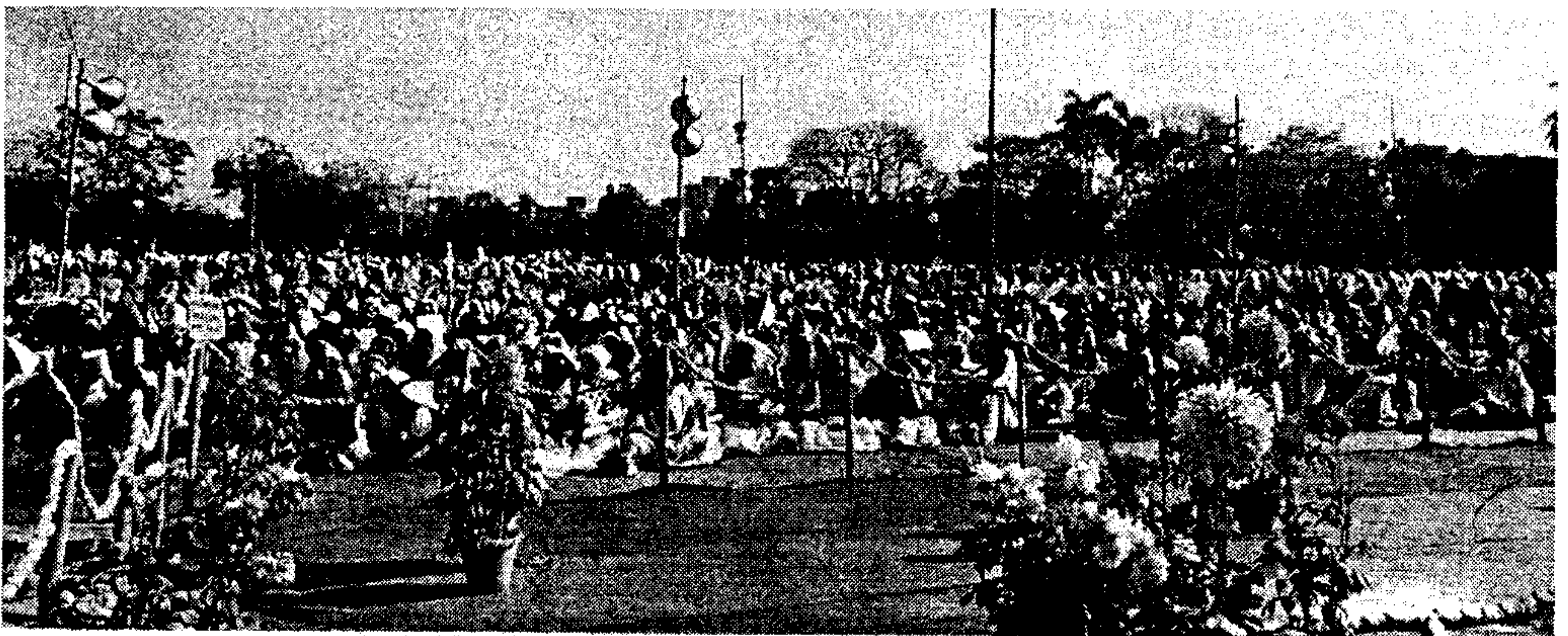
various parts of the city. Swami Ranganathanandaji presided over the valedictory function on the 14th February. The next morning Swamiji was given a farewell at Chennai Harbour, very near the spot where he boarded the ship for Calcutta a century ago. That spot has now been officially named Vivekananda Wharf. During these programmes, the Chennai Math distributed free of cost more than 70,000 copies of booklets containing Swamiji's lectures in Tamil Nadu. Nearly 1,20,000 pictures of Swamiji were also distributed.

The Ramakrishna Mission Centenary Celebration Committee, in collaboration with several private and public institutions, observed the Centenary of Swamiji's Return to Calcutta on the 19th and the 23rd February. A life-size portrait of Swamiji was brought from Budge Budge where Swamiji landed from steamer in 1897 to Sealdah railway station by Swami Gahananandaji, Vice President of the Ramakrishna Order, in a decorated special train named 'Swami Vivekananda Special'. At each station between Budge Budge and Sealdah, huge crowds greeted Swamiji with great enthusiasm and jubilation. Sri Prashanta Chatterji,



Meeting at Surendra Nath College, Calcutta

Mayor of Calcutta, received the portrait at the Sealdah station amidst loud cheers. Around twenty thousand people were present at the station and its surrounding area. The portrait was placed in a carriage which was drawn by youths, first to Surendranath College (formerly Ripon College) and then to Mitra Institution (a secondary school where Ripon College was situated during Swamiji's time)—paralleling the events which took place a century ago. Thousands of people from all walks of life including devotees, students, and monks followed the carriage in a procession. Two plaques commemorating the event were unveiled,



A view of the public meeting at Deshabandhu Park, Calcutta, on 23 February 1997



Meeting at Deshabandhu Park, Calcutta

one at the Surendranath College and another at the Mitra Institution, and meetings were held at both these institutions in which Swami Lokeswarananda and some other eminent persons spoke. In the evening, meetings were held at the historic house of late Pashupatinath Bose and at Alambazar Math, the two places visited by Swamiji on the very day of his return to Calcutta. On the 23rd, people from all strata of society including young boys and girls from various educational institutions came in colourful processions to Deshabandhu Park where a public meeting, presided over first by the Mayor Sri Prasanta Chatterji and then by Swami Gahananandaji, was held with Swami Atmasthananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission as the Chief Guest. The benedictory address of Swami Bhuteshanandaji Mharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission was read out. Sri Chittatosh Mukherjee, Chairman, Human Rights Commission, West Bengal, Dr.

R.N. Basu, Vice-Chancellor, Calcutta University, Mr. A.N. Roy former Chief Justice of India, Mr. Kamal Basu former Mayor of Calcutta, Mr. Manisankar Mukherjee, renowned Bengali writer, and Swami Lokeswarananda spoke. A large number of people attended the programme. About 5000 copies of the booklet *Vivekanander Bharat Pratyavartan* and 30,000 copies of leaflets containing an

abridged version of Swamiji's reply to the Calcutta address of welcome were distributed free of cost on both days.

MEETING ON THE 28TH FEBRUARY 1997

A meeting was held on the 28th February 1997 at Shovabazar Rajbari (North Calcutta)—the exact spot where Swami Vivekananda was given civic reception by the citizens of Calcutta a hundred years ago. Swami Lokeswarananda, Prof. Hossainur Rahman, Prof. Sankari Prasad Basu, and some other eminent citizens of Calcutta spoke before a packed audience. □

Scene at Budge Budge Railway Station

